IDA BRANDT

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ALSO BY

HERMAN BANG

Denied a Country

[DE UDEN FÆDRELAND]

1927

Ida Brandt

by *HERMAN BANG*

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY
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Contents

PART ONE 1

PART TWO 107

PART THREE 207

Part One

THE PORTER had come to fetch the three patients who worked in the basement, and he called out to Number Two, the man with the abdominal belts, who was wandering up and down, up and down, along the wall by the stove:

"We've got to be off."

"Yes." Patient Number Two stopped and looked at the porter. "Yes," he repeated with a nod, and began turning round and round, like a dog preparing to lie down. He always did that, when he had to set about the slightest thing.

Then he got his dressing-gown on like the others and the three went off. The porter's keys were heard jangling down the passage, as he locked the doors—first up here, then down below.

Ida Brandt put the cups she had washed up on a corner of the little kitchen table and went into the ward to "listen." But the two old men in there were asleep and breathing deeply.

And in Room "A" all was quiet.

Miss Brandt got up on a chair in the lobby, in order to reach the window, and moved the flowers to make room to sit there.

"Brandt's dotty," said Miss Brun of the Women's Ward; "she flutters up like a hen."

Ida Brandt leaned her head back against the wall and looked out through the great window; how calm it was over the Lakes, one blaze of red, as the sun went down.

Ida took out a letter, but sat with it in her hand for

a long time before she began to read—while the flame on the Lake outside faded and died away.

Horsens, October 1st.

My dear Girl,

You will get this letter five mail-days too late. I know that very well. But then you haven't five abominable youngsters, two of whom broke a leg of the writing-table last week. They only wanted to play ship with it, my dear, while the room was being cleaned. But now the leg's mended, and this morning I got the last of the winter curtains up, so now you will get my good wishes: God bless you, my girl, you know that is the wish of all of us at the "Villa."

So you're really twenty-eight. Well, but doesn't time fly, and when I walk past the outside mirror in Nörregade, I often think it's no longer ago than yesterday that I saw you sitting there in the window, perched on the mahogany chair, gazing in your well brought-up way (everything about you was always so proper, Ida, your eyes, your hair—how neat you were with your two pigtails and all) at us giddy young things from Miss Jörgensen's, as we came running down the street with our satchels and played "touch" in the doorways till there wasn't a whole tuck left in our skirts.

At last you would come right out to the foot of the stairs and hold on to the banisters as if you were afraid of falling into the water, until your mother came and called you in with an "I-da!" and you went back with your pigtails hanging stiff (you had the walk of an old maid, Ida, when you were a child) and your mother shut the front door.

We slunk off. There was always something about your mother which acted as a sort of damper.

I generally stopped to get my breath in our doorway. I knew Mother would have seen me in the mirror: "Oh—*there* you are" (I had come through the door sort of edgewise)—"Let me have a look at you," and I had to turn round.

"Olivia, take your fingers out of your mouth!—Ah, yes, I told you before, it'll be the last time you'll have fur trimming to your coat."—I pouted; there was always some bit of the fur that had come loose and dangled; I don't know how it was, but Regine and I, we *were* untidy and couldn't help it.

"Well, now you can go."

I made a bolt for the door with my satchel.

"Will that child ever learn to *walk?*"—I knew this was coming from the window-seat—"and only one handle to your satchel—well, now you can go."

I was on the way.

"But if Karen"—the voice went on from the window-seat—"would first be so kind as to take a brush to your hair. It's not fit to be seen."

My hair was the worst thing. It always ended with Karen having to do the brushing under Mamma's eyes. She brushed and brushed.

"No"—and Mamma gave a sigh—"there's nothing to be done with that hair. No, little Ida Brandt, she knows how to keep hers tidy."

I pursed up my lips, as stiff as a post; and Karen brushed away; you were always the pattern of virtue.—

And then do you remember when Mamma came to call on your mother and brought me—I don't think they had seen much of each other before that—and they sat in the drawing-room talking, and we sat on your two little chairs in the bedroom between your mother's bed and the window and looked at each other

and bit our fingers—when all at once I took you by both your plaits and thumped you against the edge of the bed, kept on thumping you, without saying a word.

And you never tried to defend yourself or made a sound; you only cried, very, very quietly. Do you know, my girl, I believe I've been fond of you from that moment, because you cried so quietly.—

How well I remember the Wednesdays, when I came to your house at five o'clock to fetch you to go out. When I came in, your mother called from her window-seat into the bedroom, where you sat over your lessons—you always looked as if you were going to crawl up on to the bureau when you were doing your lessons —"Ida—I-da! it's Olivia Franck."

As she went on knitting with her big needles, your mother nodded to me and said: "Sit down, my girl."

And I sat down by the door—in your home everybody sat straight on the chairs—till you had got all your things on, your jacket and your little handkerchief and your coat and your big muffler, and we curtsied before your mother.

"Has Ida got her pocket-handkerchief?" she said—I always felt for mine—"Then there's nothing else, is there?"

And we walked past the window, each keeping to our strip of pavement.

But in the evening, when the cloth was taken off—I can see your mother moving the lamp from one table to the other, she always moved it herself—we two played patience, while your mother had her whist with the old maids (dear me, now Erbelin's dead too, she kept her big double chin stiff to the last) and I kicked your shins under the table, while old Bonnitz laughed with joy when she took a trick—she had a laugh like a hiccup. At half-past eight I was to go home, and your

Sofie brought in the currant wine, and we got our apples, while my things were brought in to get warm.

Mamma used to say: "You can notice the difference for a whole day in Olivia after she's been to see Ida Brandt."

But on Sundays you came to us for the day. Do you remember, your Sofie brought you in the morning and gave "messages from the mistress" as she took off your things, one thing after another, as if she was undoing a bundle. There was nobody who terrified Mamma so much as your Sofie:

"I don't know," she used to say; "but she has a pair of eyes that seem to be looking for all the dust on the furniture."

It was a way with Mother that strange servants always made her nervous.

Mamma said in her most polite voice:

"Won't Sofie have a cup of coffee?"

And Sofie drank it, sitting straight up, on the chair by the black bookcase, without uttering a word.

We were already out of doors. It was lovely in the old courtyard (I often think, would to God I had a courtyard like that to send my boys into); Houmann's barn with our "nests" in the hay, and Dessau's loft, where you had to wade through the corn, you in your lasting boots. But oh, how I bullied you! I can see you when we were playing circus in the workshop, obediently hanging on to the trapeze by the end of your big toe, your eyes stiff with fright and your tongue sticking out, as if you were going to be heard in verbs.

When we played ship with the boys was the worst. Do you remember Müller's sugar barrels, which were cabins? They were turned into cells when the game was "Pirates." But the worst was when they were cabins, because it was always us who were ordered into them

when there was going to be a "storm," and my brothers rolled them backwards and forwards in the "heavy seas." You sat in there with your skirt over your head, poor dear, as if it was pouring rain.—

And there it was that you got your blue muslin torn on a nail.

You just sat there perfectly quiet, smoothing and smoothing out the rip over your knee, without saying a word, and I stood in front of you and simply looked at you and began to help you to smoothe it, with both thumbs, as though we could glue the tear together, until I said, breathlessly:

"We shall have to tell Mamma."

And we went, we ran up to Mother, and I said, as soon as I got inside the door:

"Ida has torn her frock."

At the word "torn" I began to cry, but you stood as still as before.

"*Where?*"—Mamma seized your frock by the hem and held it out from you like a banner: "Well, isn't that what I've always said? What must Mrs. Brandt think of this crazy house?"

You stood there shaking, but didn't cry, and Mamma scratched her hair loose behind the ears with her knitting needle.

"We must send for Miss Finsen," she said, as terrified as we were; "take off your frock."

Karen ran to fetch Miss Finsen, while you waited in one of Mother's nightdresses, and Mamma went on about "our house" and *my* frock, which I might tear as much as I liked, she was used to *that*.

"There goes Mrs. Brandt," I cried from the window seat.

Mamma dropped the frock:

"She's going to church," she said, with relief; and

we both watched your mother's straight back as she crossed the square.

"It's Pastor Hansen preaching," said Mamma.

"No," you said in a thick little voice; "it's Pastor Schmidt."

Mamma clapped her hands on her lap: "Then they won't be home before half-past twelve," she said with conviction.

When Finsen arrived she declared that they could take out a piece and then the back tucks would have to be let out.

"It won't show," she said, as she measured and turned over the blue muslin—poor Finsen had a pair of eyes as if she was always meditating how to gather up a pleat; "no, it *won't* show."

"Do you think so really?" said Mamma, who always listened to Finsen as though she was talking Latin; "well, if only it doesn't show—"

It did not show.

"Turn round, my girl," Mamma said to you, when you had the frock on again; "once more. No, it doesn't show."

"Thank God for that, Finsen!" Mamma clapped her hands on her lap: "Now we'll have custards."

Custards were Mother's inevitable treat for sempstresses. Some of the puff paste was always left sticking to Finsen's under-lip, in the crack she had made by biting off thread.

I went with you in the evening, when Sofie came to fetch you. You held my hand rather tight as we went along. When we came to the house I said:

"They're playing cards." I could see the old ladies' shadows on your white curtains.

"Yes," you whispered in a tiny, frightened voice.

We went in and you got your things off and we

curtsied all round, first I and then you, and your mother asked over her cards:

"Has Ida been good?"

"Yes"—I expect that was your first lie, my girl.

"Well, then go to bed. You know you have to practise at seven on Monday mornings. Good-night."

And you got your kiss on the forehead and went off.

"Good-bye," I said with a kind of explosion. And I *ran* home to Mamma and was quite out of breath:

"They didn't notice anything."

"Ah, thank the Lord!" said Mamma, and plumped down on the sofa. "Well, it'll do Ida a lot of good to have a taste of naughtiness once in a way."

I had smuggled myself up on the window seat with my lessons.

"May I ask, Olivia," said Mamma, "if you mean to start your lessons now? Do you think Ida Brandt steals candles to read in bed by?"—

Ah, those were the times, and who can imagine what has become of them and how the years have flown? How well I can see us in church, at the confirmation, when we were all in white with our hair smoothed down and red in the face from crying. Poor old Pastor Bacher, he's quite left behind now, they all go to Pastor Robert, last Sunday Bacher only had twenty-seven.

But goodness knows how often you had to hear me say my catechism.—

Mamma was always saying: "I think Ida looked nicest at the confirmation. There's something about that girl, the way she holds her head, a little *down*, something that's not like the others—"

And your after-confirmation dress was blue with little white spots. —

Oh, those first days after we came out, how we prac-

tised walking in long dresses, and Mamma had to make me "ruches" to hide my red wrists; and when we were all dressed up we sat among the other girls of our age, awkward and limp in our black frocks with a ruffle round the neck—my dear, how often mine had to be let out over the bust.

At Christmas we went to our first ball. For three weeks I had slept with gloves on.

"You *can't* go to a ball with those hands," Mamma said. "Ida helps in the housework, and yet she has nicer hands than you."

We drove there in Jensen's carriage, you and I on the back seat, with both skirts over our heads, while Mamma squeezed herself on to the little front seat and your Sofie was enthroned on the box with your shoes wrapped in paper.

That horrid old room at the Club, with the damp coming through the walls and the grey screen. Do you remember the screen, behind which Mrs. Ferder regularly went over Inga's neck with a wet handkerchief?

"Olivia," said Mamma; "couldn't you keep your mouth shut?"

Every mother was busy admonishing her girls and smoothing out their dresses. And we stood in the middle of the room, with our red arms, terrified and smiling and Mrs. Ferder rushed about:

"Lord, Mrs. Franck, yours look lovely," she kept on shouting. She had a packet of pins fastened to the front of her bodice, to fix up Inga's dress with. There was a hammering at the door: "Open, open!" It was Nina Stjernholm in her fur coat:

"Good evening, good evening! Oh, children, I'm awfully late," she cried, as she shook her head, loosening all the curls, and shouted to Mamma:

"Dearest Mrs. Franck, where are the young ones?"

And she looked us over, pushing fat Mrs. Eriksen aside: "Lovely, lovely," she rattled on; "but, dear Mrs. Franck, how does *mine* sit?"

"Oh but, Nina," said Mamma, "you've got it all crooked."

"*Have* I?" and Nina tugged at her body and skirt and Mamma helped to put them straight.

"But why do you have it all fitting so loosely, Nina?"

Mamma was almost in despair and pulled the band tighter at the neck, while Nina laughed:

"My dear friend," she said to Mamma, "*some* of us must show a little kindness to the elderly menfolk.—Have you any partners for the first?" she turned to us.

"Ida hasn't—"

"Good, then stick to me, Miss Brandt; I have a couple of baby lieutenants to spare, and *I* shall take the Chamberlain."

The Master of Ceremonies banged at the door and asked if the ladies were ready, and the band began to play.

"*There!*" said Nina, throwing the door open. I saw nothing but the chandelier; you and *it* were dancing already. Then I got Adolf Black, who was just as flurried as I was, because he was in evening dress, and I heard Mamma say: "Your back, Olivia!" and I saw you coming along with a lieutenant, who was biting his moustache.

But how splendid the floor was, and how we danced!

You stopped for a moment by Mamma and took both her hands:

"Oh, Mrs. Franck," you said with a quiet laugh; "how lovely it is to dance!"

Nina was awful. She had stuffed her pocket-handkerchief into her corsage and said to the Chamberlain:

"Don't look at me, Chamberlain; Mrs. Franck says I'm much to *décolleté*."

"Nina," Mamma cried half across the room. But the windmills were going round, and Inga Ferder was dancing with the blue flounces of her dress slung over her arms, while Nina got the Chamberlain to tie her shoes in the middle of the floor:

"*Nina!*" cried Mamma.

"Heavens, Mrs. Franck, what am I to do? when the string breaks?" And she sat down, in the middle of all the old ladies, and laughed.

But we danced. I heard Captain Bergfeld say to Mamma:

"That quiet little girl is charming."

The "quiet little girl" was you, my dear, and the Captain was a connoisseur.

Ah yes, those lovely early days! when summer came and the "sewing party" moved out of doors to the Grove, and we sat there in a ring, behind the pavilion, under the trees, while one of us read aloud. But all at once Nina got bored with it and shut the book with a smack, and began to sing. And we all laughed and joined in, singing right up into the air, into the limes.—

But then it was that very autumn that your mother fell ill.

You were with us, you remember, when Sofie came running in and asked for you out in the passage. You got up from the table and went without a word, without saying good-bye, after Sofie, who ran down the street. You met Miss Fischer and got hold of her, and talked to her as you went along, faster and faster.

We stood at our window and wanted to follow, but I don't know—I was frightened, afraid she might be dead already, and I said to Mamma:

"Won't you come too?"

And we got our things on and went, and found all the furniture moved in your room, because they had had to pick up your mother and carry her; and the Doctor came and the room filled with people, till the Doctor said they must go away, and Miss Fischer came running it with a bowl of ice and kept on saying, through her tears:

"But she never would take advice, she never would take advice."

I stayed with you that night and we sat up in the drawing-room and heard all the clocks ticking and announcing the slow hours with their buzzing strokes.

And we heard the night nurse whisper to Sofie and change the ice, and still we sat and listened to the clocks.

But you, poor thing, had to sit up many nights after that.

Good-bye, now, my girl. May the next year bring you a great deal of happiness. You know that is the wish of all of us at the Villa.

And then a kiss for your birthday, though you know I hate this kissing between friends. The youngsters shout that I'm to send you their love.

Your
Olivia.

Ida Brandt folded the letter and sat with her head resting against the window-frame. Over on the other side of the Lakes the lamps were being lighted, one after another. She heard Josefine bring in supper and go out again, and she heard the old men in the ward turning over in their beds.

She waited a few moments longer.

But suddenly there was a jangling of keys at the

door of the Women's Ward, and she jumped down with a start, upsetting the chair: it might be the Professor, he came at all sorts of times, and the gas was not lighted.

But no, it was Mr. von Eichbaum from the office who said:

"May I come through here, Miss Brandt?"

"Please do."

She lighted the gas, quite out of breath with her fright.

Mr. von Eichbaum stood and watched her doing it.

"It's a deuced rum thing," he said in his rather snuffling voice, "how often I find myself thinking of Ludvigsbakke since I came to this cursed office."

"But wasn't it lovely?" said Ida, as though she saw it before her; "such a lovely view over Bræstrup."

"Yes, it was fine," he said, smacking his lips; "those were the times."

He waited while she fetched the steps to light the gas over the door of "A" and went up them.

"No," he said, looking up at her; "there weren't many like the old Councillor."

They exchanged a few more words, as she came down again and went into "A." The gentleman in that room, who was sitting in a big armchair, merely raised his head and followed her with his great, clouded eyes, as she lighted the candles on his table.

"Who is he at all?" asked von Eichbaum, when she came out again.

"I don't know," she said; "a Doctor of something—" and half laughing, she added: "He's the only one that makes me afraid."

Eichbaum laughed: "Well, I'm hanged, he seems pretty quiet—"

"Yes, but I don't know—I always think he's like a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yes," said Ida, a little embarrassed; "a ghost of a person."

Mr. von Eichbaum went on laughing, without taking his eyes from her.

"Well, good evening, Miss Brandt."

He nodded and let himself out, and Ida climbed the steps to light the gas over the door of the Men's Ward. From the Women's came a shrill chattering. It was Miss Benjamin, who was always disturbed towards evening.

Ida Brandt was humming to herself unconsciously, as she served out the butter for supper; she was thinking of Olivia's letter.

And of Ludvigsbakke.

The patients who had been working in the basement came up again and began to walk round and round the lobby, uneasily, in a queerly mincing way, without taking any notice of each other, while their slippers clattered continually on the floor.

Long Bertelsen, who had "run down" like a watch, went out to the kitchen sink and rinsed his hands, a pair of clammy, reddish hands; every ten minutes he had to rinse those hands, as though he must wash a thousand sins from them.

"Well, Bertelsen, you're quite clean, you know," said Miss Brandt.

"Yes," he replied and stopped washing at once, as though he had forgotten all about it. He went up to the table and stood for a moment looking at her, as far as he could—his eyes were never in one place:

"But what *am* I doing here?" he asked with a jerk.

"Will you tell me what I'm doing here?" His voice rose with the repetition.

"You're here to get well," she replied, as she went on buttering the bread.

"Well!" he gave a snarling laugh, showing all his close-set teeth; they gleamed and gave a flash of colour to his face: "Well—here, shut up like this!"

"And then you're to take your food," she said; "and then there's another day done."

"Yes, yes," she cried into the Men's Ward, where the two patients had already taken their places at the foot of their beds and were beating the floor with their slippers in their impatience; "I'm coming—"

She first put her ear to the door of Miss Petersen's room; that lady was still so fast asleep that her breathing could be heard outside.

"Miss Petersen," she called and knocked; "you must get up."

The breathing stopped, and after a long interval there came a sleepy "Yes." Miss Petersen was on night duty. Ida took the bread and butter out into the lobby, where the man with the belts was still twirling round and round.

"You must eat your supper, Schröder," said Ida, speaking close to his face, as though to a deaf man.

"Hm," he merely looked at her.

"You must eat your supper, Schröder," she repeated.

"Hm."

"But you must eat it now"—she still spoke very clearly, as though the man were hard of hearing—"because the *Doctors* are coming."

And then she led him in and pushed him up to the table.

The Doctors could already be heard on the stairs,

and the key turned in the lock. It was the house physician and two assistants, and behind them came Miss Helgesen, the matron, with the day's report. She carried it as an officer of the court carries a legal document.

The patients at the table stood up, and the three old men in their beds followed the Doctors with their queer dim eyes.

"There's nothing, is there?" asked the physician.

"No, Doctor."

The physician went by himself into "A" and shut the door.

Dr. Qvam, his assistant, swung himself on to the table in the lobby and smacked his feet together:

"God help us, what a day we've had. Eleven brought in and one of them pumped."

"Was it laudanum?" Miss Helgesen treated the assistants professionally, as colleagues.

"Yes, it was a locksmith—they say it's a case of love, and now they've been dragging him up and down the passage for five hours—two of them. God bless my soul, when will mortals learn to take it calmly?—What do you say, Miss Brandt?"

Dr. Qvam jumped down, as the house physician came out:

"You may let the patient have a little fresh air," he said; he was already at the door of the Women's Ward.

Qvam followed up the rear; on the threshold he shook his legs in their white flannel trousers, as though he would shake the dust from his feet.

Ida fed the three old men; she had her own considerate way of lifting them up in bed.

Miss Petersen appeared from her room, fussy and out of breath:

"What's the time, 'Maid'?" she asked Ida (Miss Petersen performed ten sinuous motions of the hips for every step she took): "my watch has stopped."

"It's late," said Ida. It was always late when Miss Petersen appeared in the evening.

"Ah, yes, so nice of you to wait. I'll just run in for tea—"

Ida merely nodded, she was so accustomed to having to wait for the others half an hour beyond her duty. She sat down under the gas in the ward and began to sew.

But how well she remembered Karl von Eichbaum, now she thought of it, at home at Ludvigsbakke—him and his mother, who always sat at the head of the table, the Councillor always took her in.

Mrs. von Eichbaum took her walks punctually at the same hours and had two stone seats on the Steward's path for her own special use.

She always used to say: "There we have little Miss Brandt," as though she had discovered her for the first time.

The three patients sat at the foot of their beds playing cards, with their flannel trousers rucked up high. But Schröder wanted to go to bed. He sat in his bare shirt on the edge of the bed, his legs hanging down as though the joints were loose.

"Now you must get right into bed," said Ida.

"Yes," he replied, and stayed as he was with drooping head.

Ida had to get up before he would raise his feet painfully, as though it were a process that required profound reflection. "There," she said, tucking in the blankets; "it's much better in bed, isn't it?"

Still busy with the blankets, she tried to hush Bertelsen; he always got so noisy at cards. Then she heard

Miss Petersen's keys and began to put her sewing together; she had only to give a look at "A."

The gentleman in "A" was sitting at the table and merely raised his eyes and went on writing on his great sheets of paper. It was always columns and columns of figures, which he wrote very slowly, printing them elaborately.

"Now I will open the shutters," said Ida, going to the lofty window.

Miss Petersen was at the peep-hole when Ida came out.

The patient behind the door got up slowly and quietly seated himself on the ledge of the window. He sat there motionless, gazing out at the stars.

"What is it he's always figuring out?" asked Miss Petersen.

"Dr. Qvam says he's trying to find out the laws," replied Ida.

"Poor fellow," said Miss Petersen, not understanding a word; she gave a maidenly toss of the head as she left the peep-hole.

Ida opened the door of the "violent corridor" and went in. Two porters were holding up a dead body between them; its arms hung over their shoulders as they dragged it along.

Josefine, who was sitting on the bench under the windows, trying to make two listless male patients take their food, remarked with a toss of the head in the direction of the porters:

"What a lot of trouble it is, they've been at it five hours."

The porters turned just by the door of the "quiet corridor," where Ida was going, and one of them said to her, looking at the dangling head:

"He's a decent-looking fellow all the same."

"Yes," said Ida, looking into the face, the lips of which were open like those of a mask—and the porters turned and dragged the body on.

In the quiet corridor the doors of the cells stood open and the patients were dozing calmly in their beds. In the dining-room she found Miss Friis, who had the evening off and was going to the theatre, with her opera-glass on the table before her, buttoning her gloves:

"Ah," she said, "here we have 'the Maid'—help me, won't you?" She stretched out one hand to Ida, who always had to "help"; "I shall be fearfully late."

Ida buttoned the glove, while the matron, Miss Helgesen, who was sitting behind the tea-urn in her favourite attitude with crossed arms, said in her very distinct tones:

"What did that blouse cost?"

"Thanks, Maid."

Miss Friis gave a last look at herself in the little mirror in the corner; she did her best to preserve the appearance of two-and-twenty which had been unimpaired ten years ago, and her hair had to fall just right over the temples:

"I had it from a cousin in Aalborg," she said, referring to the blouse.

Miss Krohn and Miss Berg, who were drinking their tea at the other end of the table, said:

"Uha, now we shall have to see about clothes for the winter."

And they began to talk about hats.

"I make mine myself," said Miss Helgesen behind the urn.

The figure of a big woman appeared in the doorway:

"There's a fine stink here," she said, putting a white hand up to a broad nose, as she looked at Miss Friis.

It was Miss Koch, matron of the Women's Ward.

"Yes," said Miss Friis, who was ready at last and had picked up her opera-glass; "I don't care to smell of carbolic outside the shop. Good-night."

Miss Koch came into the room and sat down in the corner with her hands on her knees, like a man:

"May I stop here a minute?" she asked.

And Miss Helgesen, who had nodded to her, said from the urn:

"Miss Friis is very fond of clothes."

Miss Berg and Miss Krohn were still talking about hats, and Miss Koch said, scratching at her grey hair, which was secured at the back in a sort of Turk's head knot:

"Get yourselves a couple of fur caps, children, there's some wear in them."

They both laughed and went on discussing hats: of course they must go with the way one did one's hair; and then they began to talk about hair-dressing, while the two matrons compared notes about the new patients.

"There were eleven today," said Miss Helgesen.

"Yes, and a lot of bother with them," said Miss Koch.

Miss Berg couldn't imagine herself without a fringe.

"Ah," she said, "if one had Brandt's hair—Goodness me, Brandt, why ever don't you wave it?"

"I've always worn it like this," said Ida.

But Miss Berg wanted to try waving it and began fussing up Ida's fringe with a pocket comb; "Why, one wouldn't know you," she said, still ruffling her hair; "it generally looks as flat as a board—"

Miss Krohn, who was watching the operation with both arms on the table, said:

"Well, have you seen the new man in the office? He's got a parting if you like—"

They were talking of Mr. von Eichbaum, and Miss

Helgesen remarked from her place behind the urn:

"I consider Mr. von Eichbaum a very stylish person."

Miss Koch settled her glasses on her nose, as though to see better:

"Oh yes," she said; "he's one of those men that are always after a petticoat."

"I know him," said Ida, who was sitting quite calmly with her rumpled hair; "from old days at Ludvigsbakke." She always pronounced "Ludvigsbakke" with a kind of hush.

But Miss Krohn went on, making her fingers dance a jig on the table:

"The man wears straps to his trousers."

Miss Koch talked of Ludvigsbakke, which was in her part of the country, and of the old Councillor and his wife.

"But she must have been underground before you could remember."

"Yes," replied Ida; "she was dead."

"She was a grand woman," said Miss Koch; "watered her own flower-beds when she was eighty—with men's stockings pulled over her shoes—"

Miss Koch laughed as she thought of the old lady and her woollen stockings:

"But that's nearly thirty years ago now. Ah well"—Miss Koch shook the front of her skirt; it was a habit of hers when she was going to get up; "we'll all have to go some day. Are you going upstairs, Brandt?"

"Yes."

"Then we can go together," said Miss Koch; "goodnight."

They let themselves out on to the staircase by the quiet corridor and stopped at Miss Koch's door.

"Yes," said Miss Koch in quite a different tone,

pausing for a moment at the door; "it was a glorious place." She was thinking of Ludvigsbakke. "Good-night, Brandt."

"Good-night."

Ida went up, unlocking and locking again all the doors that led to her room. She lighted the lamp, which had a butterfly shade (the room was full of little things that she and Miss Roed had made when on night duty) and stood for a moment by the sofa, looking at the photograph of Ludvigsbakke, with the great white house and the lawn in front with the new flagstaff, and all the children sitting on the steps.

And *there* was Mr. von Eichbaum among them—yes, that was he—it was a long time since she had noticed him. But now she remembered quite well, the picture was taken the year he came home from school in Switzerland and used always to lie at full length on the lawn—

And there was the Councillor standing by the flagstaff.—

She went to her bureau, let down the flap and took out one or two more photographs. There was the one of the lake. She stood looking at it with a smile: hm, when there was a drought and the water was low, and all the gentlemen and Agnes Linde paddled out with bare legs and splashed about among the fish, what fun they had. But one day a pike bit Agnes Linde in the calf, so that Dr. Didrichsen had to be sent for.

It was Mrs. von Eichbaum sitting there on the bank, with the white parasol.

She closed the drawers again; they were still full of so many of Mother's old things.

Ida locked her door before she went to bed. She thought of Olivia and her children, and of Nina and her

four tall boys, whom she had seen last year, and of her father and of her home—over at Ludvigsbakke.

She saw the great white wing of the Steward's house and their rooms, clean as a new pin and so quiet, and the flowers, four in each window, in painted pots; and Father's sea-shells, which she was never allowed to touch, gleaming at the corners of the house.

And she saw the office, where she knocked at the door, very low down, when she was quite small, and came in to say that dinner was ready. Her father sat in his long linen coat at the green table, with his old straw hat on—so that he could always "take his hat off" when he was in the office—and she climbed up into the big armchair and waited, surrounded by all "Father's Birds" in their big glass cases.

Her mother opened the door:

"Brandt, dinner's waiting."

"Yes, my dear—is the child there?—ah—"

And he patted Ida with a pair of kindly, absent hands:

"Yes, my dear, yes, my dear."

"Your hat, Brandt," said her mother.

They went out. Ida strutted by the side of her father, who pulled her in against his knees, so that she stumbled over his boots.

"Brandt," said her mother, "I don't know how you're walking with the child."

After dinner her father took his place on the sofa with a handkerchief over his face; her mother sat in her chair by the window. In a few minutes they were both asleep.

Ida stole round quietly and opened all the doors ajar. Then she seated herself on a footstool, while her parents had their sleep.

In the afternoon her mother and Ida went to take coffee with the Madsens at the school. They lived on the high road, where you could see everyone who drove past. And among them was Mrs. Mogensen from the dispensary at Bræstrup.

She had just bought herself a sewing-machine in Copenhagen.

Yes, Mrs. Madsen had been to see it. But in *her* opinion hand-sewing was more durable.

Her mother nodded: "But you know, they must try everything new at the Dispensary."

Ida sat on a little chair learning to knit, and had her own little cup.

When her mother and Ida went home they took the road past the "great house." The only lights burning were in Miss Schröder's room and at the Steward's.

"Good-evening," said a voice. It was the foreman, Lars Jensen, who rose from a bench.

"Good-evening," answered her mother.

And they passed on, into the dark Steward's avenue.

At home they heard laughter as soon as they came near. It was the Ranger and his wife, who had come over to tea. Her mother went out to get it ready, and Ida curtsied first to the lady, a fragile little person, who had brought eleven boys into the world, and whose eyes had grown larger with each child she had borne —and then to the Ranger.

"Well, how's the little lass?" he said, lifting her up in both arms, with a swing. Lund was a huge, broad man, who turned red right down to his neck when he laughed.

"Lund, Lund, you're so rough," said his wife; "you're only used to boys."

"Uha!" said Lund, still swinging her; "it'll do her good. It circulates the blood."

They went in to tea. "Oh," said Mrs. Lund (for there was no house where you saw so many pretty things on the table as at the Steward's); "how lovely it must be to be able to keep everything as you do, Mrs. Brandt."

The Ranger's house was rather chaotic; eleven was a good many offspring.

They discussed the local news and the sewing-machine. The Ranger had been in to see how it ran.

"One ought to inspect the contrivance, you know," he said.

"It is a hand machine, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Brandt.

"Yes; but the devil knows how long it'll last."

"Well, Lund," said his wife with a wistful look; "it must be a fine thing all the same, in a house where there's a lot of sewing to be done."

"Ha, *née* Silfverhjelm"—the lady put her maiden name underneath Mogensen on her cards—"might manage to sew her few little petticoats by hand, I should think."

"But there are some people," said Mrs. Brandt, handing round a dish, "who always like to be among the first to get a thing."

"And if they have nothing else to think about," said Mrs. Lund, "you can't blame them."

Mrs. Lund, whose tone always made you think she was trying to hush somebody, went on to talk of the price of butter:

"Now Levy's dropped it again."

Mrs. Brandt could not understand it; she had always been able to keep up the price.

"Ah," said Mrs. Lund, shaking her head with its four little curls, tied with a velvet ribbon; "but the reason is, it doesn't always turn out quite the same with us—goodness knows why."

"Now we'll have a snaps, Ranger," said Brandt, who

sat looking first at one and then at another; "has the child got anything?"

Ida had been given a blunt knife to butter her own bread. "One ought to *accustom* children," said her mother; "it's good for them."

"Your health, Steward," said the Ranger, and they talked of when the Councillor might be expected. It would hardly be for a couple of months yet, about the end of July.

"When the woods are past their best," said the Ranger.

After tea Ida was to go to bed. Her father took her on his knee, when she said good-night, and gave her a ride.

"You'll make the child seasick," said Lund with a laugh, and Ida said good-night to the others, one by one.

The Ranger and his wife went at ten.

"Take my arm," said Lund, "it's pretty dark."

"Madam Brandt's a bit touchy all the same," he said. "I'm blowed if she can forget that we've known her as housekeeper—and all that."

"But they *are* useful, Lund," she said.

To that the Ranger made no reply. "But of course she makes a fine figure at the head of a table," was all he said.

"And how well kept everything is," said his wife. That was always a source of amazement to her when she visited other people's houses.

The Lunds walked homeward.

But Mrs. Brandt was busy locking up her silver—

Ida had a children's party, which had to take place now, before the Councillor arrived.

The children drank chocolate on the mound which overlooked the private garden.

The little girls sat in a row, stiff as starch. The innkeeper's two were at the end of the table in their tartan winter frocks and ear-rings, and all were eating and drinking.

Mrs. Brandt, in a white shawl, went round filling the cups and said:

"Hasn't Ingeborg had anything?"

Ingeborg was the only child of the District Judge and wore open-work mittens and grey bows.

Not a syllable was spoken.

Ida, who was the smallest of all, went round showing her dolls to those who had finished; while the Ranger's two youngest, Edvard and Karl Johan, who had cracked hands ("God knows how it is," said Mrs. Lund, "but all the dirt gets into those boys' hands"), snatched at the cake plates with a sudden grab, as though they had to filch their food.

"Sofie," said Mrs. Brandt, looking down the silent table; "they haven't anything at the end there," as though the all-important thing was to stuff them.

"No, thanks," said Ingeborg, when Mrs. Brandt offered her more; "we dine so late."

The innkeeper's two had turned their cups upside down.

Brandt appeared at the foot of the mound; his trousers kept getting into the back of his shoes as he walked.

"Well, well, here we are!" he said as he came up; "have you had anything to eat?" he asked. "Well, well,"—he went round pinching their cheeks and calling them by name, awkwardly, because he didn't know what else to say, while the little girls shifted in their seats and looked down at their skirts.

"But now you must play," he said.

"Now they must play," he repeated to his wife.

"But perhaps some of the children would like something more," replied Mrs. Brandt.

"No," said the innkeeper's eldest curtly, behind her cup, deciding the matter for them all.

"But then you must play," Brandt went on in the same tone; he didn't know what they were to play at.

"We might throw handkerchiefs," said the District Judge's Ingeborg, while the rest of the little girls sat still and blushed.

"Yes, yes, but children ought to make a noise," said Brandt; "children ought to make a noise, they ought to run about." And all at once he exclaimed, quite worried:

"I'll go and fetch Schröder, my dear," and went off.

The Ranger's boys muttered something about not knowing that game of handkerchiefs and went away and sulked by a tree.

"Then will you begin," said Ida, who was hanging on the edge of a bench by the side of Ingeborg; and she handed her a handkerchief which was much too small to throw.

Brandt ran through the garden, going by the private gate. Up at the great house all the doors were wide open and there was a smell of starched lace curtains and cleanliness.

Miss Schröder was in the drawing-room, standing on a pair of steps in her stocking feet; she liked to throw off her shoes when she was busy.

"Bless me, Steward, have you come to *fetch* me?" she cried, letting her arms drop.

"Yes, little Schröder, you must come across—we can't make it go," said Brandt, pushing his spectacles up and down; "there's nobody knows how these children are to be amused." He gave a hoist to both legs of

his trousers: "I believe there are fifty of them," he said.

"Gracious!" Schröder clawed at her hair; "but I'm in the thick of it."

Schröder looked round: there were curtains lying on every chair. "And tomorrow we shall have them," she said. She came down the steps and smacked on her shoes: "It's cruel how hot your feet get," she said.

Schröder felt the heat all over, and from the first day of June she was always to be seen in her way through the garden with a towel; she bathed in the pond. "There's nothing on earth like water," she said.

"Well, in God's name then"—she gave a look at the curtains—"we'll hang them up tonight."

Over on the mound they had started playing "Post."

"God bless my soul!" said Schröder, surveying the group; "what kind of a funeral is this? We must get them to stir their stumps."

She formed the children into ranks and made them march. Ida took her hand and, when they had gone a little way, Ingeborg came and took Schröder's other hand.

"Look," said the Judge's child to Schröder; "I've got bronze shoes."

But the Ranger's boys smacked the innkeeper's girls behind, as they brought up the rear.

After that they played hide-and-seek down by the pond. Brandt had gone with them and from sheer joy he got in the children's way, wherever they ran.

"Now you can hear 'em," he said.

"Yes," said Schröder, pulling down her sleeves; "but I've got twelve pair to hang up."

Mrs. Brandt and Sofie, both walking erect, carried plates of sandwiches through the garden and up to the mound and laid the table again.

Ida was happy. Twice she ran up to Schröder and kissed her hand, without saying a word.

The House party were going for a picnic in the woods and had just started in two carriages, while the Councillor was enthroned in the governess cart like a bishop. Mrs. Brandt went over to the house with the local paper.

Schröder was in the pantry, where she had been packing the baskets.

"Phew, I haven't a scrap on underneath," she said, smacking the front of her calico gown; "and now we can begin to put the spare rooms straight."

She ran out through the kitchen, where three cottagers' wives, with handkerchiefs tied round their heads, were getting ready the servants' supper, and across the passage to the spare rooms.

"Ah," said Schröder, "here's a nice mess."

All the doors between the rooms stood open and none of the trunks had been closed. Dresses and petticoats were lying all over the place. Schröder chattered as she moved them and hung them up.

Mrs. Brandt said nothing, but went round lifting the skirts and inspecting the materials critically:

"Yes, they can do it," she said.

"Ah," said Schröder, turning round; "they're not always so well off for underclothes, these Copenhageners —you can tell that by the way they're always having them washed."

Mrs. Brandt made no reply (it was never her way to talk or ask questions, she just used her grey eyes), while Schröder ran on in front, bustling and chattering:

"Well, God knows what it'll come to with Miss With and Falkenberg—but they suit, you know, tall men and

short wives—you always find that. And she's such a nice girl."

Schröder slammed down the lid of a trunk and dashed off on another subject:

"Miss Adlerberg," she said, "has a blouse, do you know, that it would be lovely to get hold of some time. If we could get Miss Jensen to run up here from Bræstrup one day when they're out—"

Miss Jensen was the dressmaker at Bræstrup and used sometimes to take a pattern in the visitors' rooms in summer.

"It's a 'Garibaldi,'" Schröder explained, as she went into the farthest room, where two severe-looking trunks stood locked and all the dresses were hung up, wrapped in tulle.

"This is Mrs. von Eichbaum's," she said.

"Miss Schröder!" cried Ida, outside the window.

"There's the child," said Schröder, as she reached out and lifted the "little busybody" in, before unpacking a broad black moiré train that hung at the end of the room.

"There's a train, eh? It's lined."

As Ida stood staring at the mass of silk, Schröder laughed and held it over her like a cloak; but Mrs. Brandt felt the lining:

"It's been used before," she said.

"Yes," said Schröder, "but do you know, it's wonderful what they get out of it."

To Schröder that was always the wonderful thing about the Copenhageners.

"And now we'll go," said she.

When they came to the last window she picked up Ida and put her back on the grass path:

"If you don't run about you'll never grow," she said with a laugh; "and now there's the washing to count."

"Well, I can't be of any help, can I?" said Mrs. Brandt, already at the door of the passage.

"Oh no," said Schröder; "one's got to pitch into it oneself."

She paused for a moment on the steps watching Mrs. Brandt's back, as that lady crossed the yard:

"I believe there's thunder coming," she said, panting; "I hope to God there is."

The three cottagers' wives moved quietly about the kitchen. They were in black stocking feet, though the floor was stone.

Over at the Brandts' Mrs. Madsen had looked in from the schoolhouse. As a rule they never saw so much of one another in summer-time.

"We know very well," as Mrs. Madsen used to say to Mrs. Ludvigsen, "the people at the 'House' are friendly enough in winter-time."

The Steward went in and out uneasily; he always felt a reminder in his knees when thunder was coming. And there was a mass of cloud gathering over Bræstrup.

Mrs. Madsen, to be sure, had already set out curdled cream, she said, for Madsen had prophesied thunder the first thing in the morning. He felt it in his wound.

Madsen had got a sabre-cut in the first Slesvig war and was Chairman of the local Veterans.

In the evening Schröder stood right out on the road watching for the carriages; the lightning was flashing already behind Bræstrup, and Mrs. von Eichbaum was always so timid about driving, and now with a storm coming on—

The Steward's maids ran shouting past her with sheets that had been spread out to bleach, and in the

farmyard she heard the bailiff calling to the men to close all the shutters—when both the carriages arrived, at top speed. The Councillor was sitting in the chaise with Mrs. von Eichbaum.

The maids were shutting all the windows of the house, and the Councillor began to shout as soon as he reached the gate:

"Is everything closed?" while the bailiff came running out of the farmyard in a great cloak.

The visitors, stiff and frightened, got down at the steps. Mrs. von Eichbaum was as white as a sheet; she went to her room, pulled down the blinds and lighted the candles. She was always nervous when "the elements were raging."

The Councillor, who went through the rooms to see that the windows were bolted, called out that they were all to keep together; and Schröder ran through the rain to the Steward's and brought them back with her. Ida trotted along with her head sticking out of a long cloak, and Mrs. Madsen was with them, as she was afraid to go home.

"Indoors, indoors!" cried Schröder, who had Karl Eichbaum in her lap.

But Miss Rosenfeld had put on a bathing cap and was standing in the middle of the lawn, catching the rain in her hands.

"Come indoors," the Councillor called to her, and with stooping shoulders she ran laughing in under the glass roof.

"Here!" said Miss Adlerberg, as she caught her. They all sat or stood on the garden steps, watching the silent flashes through the rain.

"Here," said Miss Adlerberg, forcing Miss Rosenfeld down on a plaid.

They all spoke under their voices, looking out at the sky, which was growing darker, and telling stories of storms and lightning.

"Yes," said the farm bailiff in his drawling voice; "when Aggersögaard was burnt, you remember, sir, we had a hard time of it getting the animals out—"

The bailiff broke off, as a flash came, more vivid than before.

"But both the Baron's carriage horses," he went on, "they got away from us—it was a bad job."

"Yes," said the Councillor, who was standing by Brandt's side; "we stood here, you and I, when the old flagstaff was struck—"

"We did, sir."

And the Councillor went on, in the same tone:

"That was the year my poor wife died."

Mrs. Madsen nodded; she remembered it.

The flashes became sharper and more frequent; in the light of them they saw the cattle in the fields and the houses at Bræstrup. Nobody spoke except Miss Adlerberg, who whispered to Mr. Feddersen of the Foreign Office:

"At our country place we always pull down the blinds, light the chandeliers and dance," she said, fanning herself with her garden hat.

The rain was getting heavier and drummed on the glass roof, while the poplars on the drive swayed and bent as though they would break.

"There it comes," said the bailiff quietly: the first thunder-clap rolled up towards them.

Miss With clutched the shoulder of Lieutenant Falkenberg, who was sitting on the step at her feet:

"Listen." And she said in her thin little voice: "At home Mother and I always go down to the cellar."

Another flash came, and Schröder spoke in a hush, till the thunder followed.

"It's over Ringsgaard," said the Councillor, who knew every spot in the neighbourhood and how far it was.

"That's so, sir."

They had not finished speaking before another flash came. The lightning came from two sides, like broken gleams, and they saw the level fields, where the cattle were flying round in great circles, and the whole sky, where the black-edged clouds rolled up towards them like war-chariots.

Nobody spoke now; only Miss Rosenfeld, who was taking it all in with her head thrust forward, whispered gently:

"How lovely it is, how lovely it is—"

Mrs. Madsen moved her lips incessantly and Ida had buried her head under her mother's arm, when another flash came.

They saw a horseman enter the farmyard gate and a man in a cloak came running across the open space. It was the Ranger, who came from the "Lady's Wood" and could not get his horse to go any farther.

The thunder drowned his voice, and it was so dark that they could scarcely see his face, as he said:

"There's a fire west of Bræstrup—a big blaze—"

"Is it at Christen Nielsen's?" asked the Councillor. And they exchanged a few hushed words as to the amount of his insurance.

"I don't like this though," whispered Miss Adlerberg to Feddersen, clasping her hands over her garden hat.

But Schröder dropped the boy, Karl von Eichbaum, and suddenly ran in to Mrs. von Eichbaum's door. Through the keyhole she saw her sitting pale and motionless by her candles.

Miss With had not let go of Falkenberg's shoulder and he could feel her icy hand against his cheek. When the flashes came he saw her face, white as a corpse, and her eyes, which looked as though they were green.

"Miss With, Miss With," he said.

Another flash came, and a crash, as though an immense mass of iron had been flung to the ground at their feet:

"There goes another oak," said the Ranger, who was thinking all the time of his woods.

Nobody spoke, nor could any voice have been heard. When the thunder died away for a minute they heard the cattle bellowing in the fields and the plaintive baaing of the sheep.

"It is at Christen Nielsen's," said Brandt. For an instant they saw the flames, behind the barns, in the darkness.

"See to the farmyard," said the Councillor to the bailiff.

A flash burst upon them like a huge shining auger, and the bailiff ran, waving his arms as one dazed, and ran again, while the crash came, a crash as of a thousand things being torn asunder and smashed; and Ida, who had struggled away from her mother, cried: "Father, father," and made a desperate effort to reach him.

Falkenberg had taken Miss With's hands: "Miss Emmy," he said, calling her by her Christian name for the first time. "Miss Emmy."

"Yes, yes," she whispered, not knowing what she was saying, while he still held her hands.

It was perfectly still for a few moments, and they only heard the rain falling heavily.

Then Miss Rosenfeld said to Feddersen, to whom as a rule she scarcely ever spoke, in a low, almost rever-

ent voice, passing her hand slowly over her forehead:

"But how beautiful it was."

They all sat in silence, as though still waiting. But the lightnings grew paler over the fields and the thunder died away. A refreshing coolness seemed to rise out of the ground, and the rain slackened. Then, in the western sky, they saw the stars again. Mrs. Madsen was telling Feddersen about Madsen's sabre-cut, and the Councillor and the Ranger went down to the road to have a view of the fire at Christen Nielsen's.

The rain was soft and mild. They heard it fall on the roof as a gentle trickle, and its drops filled the night as with a luminous dust.

Then Miss Rosenfeld, who was sitting with her head in her hands, began to sing softly.

Falkenberg was still holding Miss With's hands in his.

"Join in," said Miss Rosenfeld, turning her head towards them. And the girls sang below their voices, almost humming:

> "Fly, bird, fly over Furesö's waters,
> Soon the dark night will be here . . ."

"Look," said Brandt. Ida had fallen asleep on his arm, with her head against his shoulder.

"Look at the child," he whispered, bending down to Miss With. He had such a happy look, as they took up the song again, the Ranger joining in from the drive in his hushed bass:

> "Fly, bird, fly over Furesö's billows,
> Ply thy wings swiftly and well . . . ."

The singing died away.

Outside the rain had ceased, and they all came down

the steps (Falkenberg and Miss With walking side by side) and took long breaths of the cool night air.

Then Schröder appeared with a huge tray. They must certainly have something, she said, after their alarms.

But they stayed out on the paths for a while. Then came a laugh and a cry from the road; it was the Councillor, who had stolen a kiss from Miss Adlerberg.

Soon after they separated.

Brandt was still carrying Ida. He strode softly with his long legs so as not to wake the child.

When all had gone to bed, Miss Rosenfeld stole out of her room and upstairs. She opened a window in the gable and sat on the ledge with her hands on her knees.

There she watched the break of day.

It was the nineteenth of August, and the whole of Ludvigsbakke was in commotion. Tomorrow was the Councillor's birthday and he would be seventy.

Schröder was baking "cringles," surrounded by a cloud of steam. She had locked the kitchen door with a huge rusty old key:

"We can't have any idle folks in the kitchen today," she said. The key hung in a pocket of her calico gown and swung against her legs.

The girls were making garlands in a corner of the grove and ran past the Steward's mound with baskets full of green. Mrs. Brandt, who looked like a sentry standing at ease, was on the mound with Ida, till Miss Rosenfeld came up the slope and lifted Ida over the fence.

"We'll take her with us, Mrs. Brandt," she said.

Down in the grove their laughter and chattering could be heard a long way off, as they strung oak-leaves and asters on the clothes-lines.

Miss Adlerberg worked with gloves on:

"This terrible mess spoils one's fingers," she said, and she took off her gloves every few minutes, for Feddersen to see whether she was getting red marks.

Ida went round picking up all the asters which had been dropped and put them in Miss Rosenfeld's lap.

"Thank you, my little friend," said Miss Rosenfeld.

Mrs. Mogensen of the Dispensary, who was sitting beside Miss Adlerberg, in a dress covered with trimmings, remarked:

"Yes, it's terrible for the hands. And, you know, Franz" (that was her husband) "never lets me do anything because of my hands."

"A little glycerine will put it right," said Miss Rosenfeld; "thank you, my friend."

This was to Ida, who was still collecting flowers too short in the stalk.

Brandt came up and went from one to another, all his fingers black with gunpowder; he had been making rockets and coloured lights in the office:

"Ah, last year," he said, "they were quite good—they all went off except one. But when the Councillor got his title my clerk, Eriksen, made a Catherine-wheel —you ought to have seen it."

Brandt came up to Miss Rosenfeld:

"Ah, you've got the child," he said with a smile, patting Ida's hair with his black fingers.

"But you ought to do something for your cough, Steward," said Miss Rosenfeld.

Brandt had been coughing badly of late.

"Phew!" the girls drew a long breath and shook their skirts; "how many yards have we got now?"

And one of them swung the garland like a skipping-rope, while the other began to sing:

"Hark to the horn of the hunter,
Hark to the crack of the gun—
Hallo, hallo, hallo! . . ."

The Ranger and his wife were on the mound with Mrs. Brandt. Mrs. Lund had walked across; she would have to present a bouquet.

"And my roses," she said; "goodness knows how it is —I thought they promised so well, and now I'm getting nothing but buds. And those in the churchyard make such a fine show, but I shouldn't like to use them for such an occasion—"

Mrs. Lund was welcome to take what Mrs. Brandt had. But it wasn't much.

"O dear me," said Mrs. Lund, quite relieved; "it's the intention that counts with the Councillor."

The Ranger struck his heels together and said:

"Well, I'm a sober man, Mother, but on the twentieth I'm going to get drunk."

"All right, Lund," said his wife; "as long as you don't make speeches."

Mrs. Madsen arrived by the gooseberry path. She didn't know where to turn: Madsen's tall hat must be ironed, and she was at her wit's end for an iron—

"Damme, that's a bad look-out," said the Ranger; "and Madsen has to represent the military forces."

The Veterans were to march up at twelve o'clock.

The girls came out of the grove in a body, and Mrs. Mogensen waved up to the mound from below her white parasol. Ida shook hands with them all before she went up.

Mrs. Madsen wanted to walk across the fields beyond the grove, and the Lunds went with her. They crossed the stile and saw all the wreaths and garlands lying on the ground.

"It's very pretty, very pretty," said Mrs. Lund, seating herself on a bench; she was always wanting to sit down.

But Mrs. Madsen went round measuring each length carefully: "When the Councillor's lady was buried we had a hundred and fifty yards," she said.

At eleven o'clock the Councillor went round with a candle and locked all the doors. That was the custom of the house. He wore a skull-cap (in the daytime he had a red wig, exactly like the Steward's), and he tried every lock.

The girls, who had hidden in Miss Adlerberg's room, sat and giggled in the dark, as he went past.

Then Falkenberg knocked on the window from outside, and they opened it:

"We've rescued the wine," he whispered.

The girls jumped out quietly, one after the other, laughing and holding their skirts.

"And the lamps?" one of them whispered.

"Got them," he whispered back.

And they all stole along the wall of the house, very quietly, till suddenly they broke into a run across the lawn, as the dogs began to bark.

"That's Hector," whispered Miss Adlerberg, seizing Feddersen's arm.

"Hush."

They reached the trees. Miss Rosenfeld walked slowly behind all the rest.

Under the beeches five lamps were alight. They sat down at the table to finish the garlands. Miss With sat on the stile a little way off, looking out into the night, which lay dark upon the fields.

"Emmy," called a voice very softly. It was Falkenberg.

"Yes."

And then there were two, sitting close to each other and looking into the blackness.

In the morning Falkenberg and the gardener hung the garlands on the front of the house, both whistling as they worked. Old Brandt, who had hoisted the flag, was busy with the pennons. But he was poorly and coughing all the time.

He stood for a moment looking over towards Bræstrup, where the flags were running up in front of every farm-house; the morning breeze played briskly in the red bunting.

"It's a fine sight," he said; "and all the stacks too—ah, what a lovely spot it is."

He began to walk across to the Steward's wing; he would see about getting a cup of something warm. But when he came in, he said:

"I think I'll lie down for a bit." He had fits of shivering and could scarcely stand on his feet.

"Very well, Brandt," said his wife, who was bathing Ida in a basin; "but you *must* get up to present the candlesticks."

"Yes, Mariane," said Brandt, who was dozing off.

The carriages were already beginning to drive up, and Sofie ran backwards and forwards announcing who had come. Mrs. Brandt was in her under-garments, doing her hair; her white petticoats lay all over the bedroom. She got her skirt on and her bodice fastened, while Brandt lay in his bed, dozing and waking and dozing again.

They heard more and more carriages and many footsteps on the gravel.

"Here comes the band from Horsens," cried Sofie, making for the gate in her stocking feet.

"And there lies Brandt," said his wife, who was putting on her lace sleeves and her hat in the garden room.

The brass instruments played lustily, and there was a sound of many voices.

"Now then, Brandt, the Veterans have come," said Mrs. Brandt, who had his clothes over her arm and spoke all the time as though she wanted to shake him out of his sleep.

"Where's the child?" was all Brandt said.

Ida, who had been crying because her curl-papers had been screwed too tight, came in a white frock.

"Now not too close to the bed," said Mrs. Brandt, smoothing Ida's skirt; but her father took up the end of her sash and held it between his hands.

"Well, now I suppose I must get up," he said, still smiling at the child, very weakly.

They continued to hear footsteps and music and a voice giving words of command: this was Madsen. Then the brass band again. It seemed to Brandt so strangely far away.

"There's the Chamberlain," cried Sofie; she flung the door wide open, holding her cotton apron, which she had taken off in her excitement.

"Now the County Council's here, Brandt," said his wife, whose steps grew heavier and heavier as she walked about the room; she put his clothes on a chair.

"Yes, Mariane," said Brandt, sitting up in bed. But Mrs. Brandt had run out to do the honours: they were to assemble here.

"Ida, Ida," she called.

Ida, who still kept a little way from the bed, said, as though trying to wake him:

"Father, now you must get up."

"Yes, child, I'm coming now."

He heard the Chamberlain's voice in the garden room, and he managed to sit on the side of the bed. There was such a burning pain in his side.

Then the door opened. It was the Ranger in all his war paint:

"Why, what the hell's this, Brandt?" he began, but suddenly checked himself: "Whatever is the matter with you?"

"I'm not well," said Brandt.

"No, by Jove, I can see that. And your wife said it was only the usual."

Brandt sat still for a few moments:

"No," he said, and his head fell upon his chest; "I can't go across."

The Ranger went out and fetched the Doctor, who appeared in a dress-coat, wearing his Dannebrog cross: "What's this, old friend, going sick on the great day?" he said, but turned serious at the sight of Brandt: "Lift him up," he said to the Ranger and began hurriedly to stethoscope Brandt's chest and back.

Outside the band had stopped playing, and Madsen's voice could be heard above the noise.

"Now Madsen's there with the flag," said Brandt, smiling.

The Doctor was still listening to Brandt's back, while the Ranger stood at the foot of the bed, bending forward, as though he too wanted to listen: "Somebody will have to go to Bræstrup," the Doctor said simply, as he went out.

He sat down to write his prescription among all the guests, while Mrs. Brandt stood beside him, and the members of the County Council all talked loudly of the day and the speeches and festivities.

"Brandt always does take on so," said Mrs. Brandt.

The Doctor did not answer; in the bedroom Brandt, who seemed a little calmer since he had seen the Doctor, was asking: "But what about this evening?" He was thinking of the fireworks.

They heard the members of the Council go out through the garden; there was a sudden silence.

"But now nobody must worry about me," said Brandt. "And I'm better now."

"Yes," said the Ranger.

He went into the sitting room, where his wife still sat:

"Let us go," he said in a low voice; "we mustn't alarm the Councillor, you know."

They went out together with the Doctor, and their steps died away on the path, till all was silent. Mrs. Brandt went about the sick-room putting things tidy; she was in black, in her wide silk gown, which rustled.

"But it's no use giving yourself up," she said, shaking up her husband's pillows.

She stood by the bed for a moment and said in the same tone:

"Now Mogensen will have to present the candlesticks."

The sick man only jerked his head—perhaps it was a fly—and asked:

"Aren't you going across with the flowers?"

"Yes, we shall have to," said his wife.

But Ida began to cry, because her father was not coming with them:

"*There*," said Mrs. Brandt, drying her face; but the child kept on whimpering as they crossed the garden.

Then there was perfect silence, while Sofie sat knitting behind the door. The only sounds were the buzzing of the flies and the ticking of the tall clock, which seemed so hard and persistent all at once.

The sick man tossed in his bed; he was getting so restless with the fever.

Now he heard the Chamberlain's voice—Sofie ran out to the fence—and raised his head slightly, as

though trying to listen: now the Chamberlain was proposing the Councillor's health.

But Brandt could hear nothing, and there were so many images in his head, images that crowded upon him and floated past and vanished—pictures of the days before he came here, and of the time when the Councillor's lady was alive and before they had Ida.

What a tiny little red thing she was—and she had known him before she knew her mother—

All at once Brandt took hold of the bed-cord and pulled himself up: now they were cheering the Councillor.

Then he fell back again and dozed.

When he opened his eyes Miss Rosenfeld was sitting by the bedside with Ida on her lap:

"We wanted to come over and see you, Mr. Brandt," said Miss Rosenfeld.

"Yes," he said, still with his eyes on Ida; "here I am, you see."

Miss Rosenfeld put Ida on the edge of the bed: "Ida can sit there," she said.

"Yes."

The sick man was still smiling and moved his hands, which were burning hot, in the direction of Ida.

"But won't she crumple her frock?" he said, closing his eyes.

They heard the clock strike, slowly, as though it were in no hurry, and Miss Rosenfeld gently took Ida's hand out of the sick man's. They went out on tiptoe, Ida clutching the lady's gown tightly, and sat on the sofa. It was perfectly quiet in the room; only the hard ticking of the clock.

"Miss Rosenfeld," whispered Ida; "is Father going to die?"

"But child, child," said Miss Rosenfeld, stroking Ida's hair, as the child began to cry, without a sound.

They heard steps on the path. It was Mrs. Brandt who came in, followed by the Councillor. He wore the broad ribbon of the Grand Cross and had red spots on his cheeks.

"But what is this I hear?" he said, speaking rather loudly: "here's illness." And Mrs. Brandt, who led the way to the bed, said, as though to wake her husband (there seemed to be a note of anger in her voice all that day):

"Brandt, here is the Councillor."

Miss Rosenfeld heard the Councillor say, in his festival tone:

"My dear Brandt—" But then he suddenly dropped his voice; he sat down, placing his chair a little way from the bed, with the vague uneasiness of all old people in the presence of illness:

"But what is this—what is this—?"

"Well—I suppose Mogensen has presented the candlesticks," said Brandt, trying to take his hand.

Ida had quietly stolen out. Miss Rosenfeld called to her softly from among the currant bushes, but there was no answer. Then she found her on a wooden seat just outside the bedroom window, curled up quietly, like a little dog. And Miss Rosenfeld sat down beside her, almost in the same attitude.

They heard the Councillor returning through the garden, and Mrs. Brandt going into the sick-room. She took her place at the foot of the bed, with the broad ribbons of her cloak hanging over her bosom, as though she would bar the way.

A cautious step was heard in the sitting-room, and Mrs. Brandt rose to her feet. It was Mrs. Lund, creeping in and stopping at every step.

She paused again and put her arms round Mrs. Brandt:

"We think it's so sad, Lund and I," she said.

And as Mrs. Brandt said nothing, she went on: "Couldn't we do anything to help?"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Brandt, still thinking of the way Miss Rosenfeld had occupied her sofa just before; "we shall manage by *ourselves*."

Mrs. Lund was in a queer hurry to regain the garden path, where the Ranger was waiting.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"No," was all she said, in a choking voice. And Lund said (they always understood each other without words):

"Yes, she's a stiff-necked one." He felt a kind of longing to use his fists.

Mrs. Lund had her handkerchief out:

"Oh, Lund," she said; "I'm sure it's only her way."

Mrs. Brandt was still in the sitting-room. She shut all the windows tight and went back to mount guard.

Evening came and it was dark in the sick-room, where a little lamp was burning and the Doctor came and went; a red glare appeared on the curtains.

"How bright it is," said the sick man, turning his head.

"It's the torches," said the Doctor.

"Yes, it's pretty," said Brandt.

The Ranger sat on the seat outside. He had not got drunk on the twentieth of August.

"How is he?" he asked.

"Bad," said the Doctor.

As they came into the avenue they met Miss Adlerberg with Mr. Feddersen of the Foreign Office.

"We're taking a walk," said Miss Adlerberg—it was rather dark in the avenue—"how is he?"

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"It's infernally unlucky," said Feddersen; "for the Councillor's sake. It can be felt all over the house, in a way."

In the sick-room all was quiet; the only sounds were Mrs. Brandt's knitting-needles, as regular as the ticking of the clock, and now and then the music from the house, where they were dancing.

Then Brandt called: "Mariane," and took her hand; "it's hard luck on you—"

But his wife's hand with all its rings seemed too heavy for his, and he dropped it and closed his eyes.

"The illness must take its course," said Mrs. Brandt, smoothing the sheet; Brandt was always clutching at it with his thin fingers.

"But I should like to speak to the Lieutenant," he said.

"Very well," said his wife, feeling his legs, which were cold up to above the knees. She stood a long while motionless, looking at the old man, whose shrunken form was outlined under the blankets, before she sat down again:

So now she would be left a widow.

The Lieutenant was running about the lawn, busy with the rockets. They were to be let off now, while the dancing was going on. The music stopped, and Falkenberg called up to the farm bailiff, who stood at a window: the first rocket went off in a meagre little streak, which split into two.

The guests stood at the open windows, while the rockets whistled thinly into the air and the gentlemen from Horsens, who were smoking cigars with their hands in their trouser-pockets, uttered a long "O-oh!" and a little lady, who was short in the legs and had

tied a handkerchief round her bare throat for the draught, said:

"Fancy missing a dance for that little show!"

At the top window Miss Rosenfeld held up Ida in her arms. Ida had kept with her all day long, saying nothing, simply following her, with cold hands, like a poor little shadow.

"Look there, look," she said.

Another rocket went up, as Feddersen came past with Miss Adlerberg:

"They don't go very high," he said.

And Miss Adlerberg, who carried her train over her arm, replied with a laugh:

"They're country-made."

Miss Rosenfeld turned sharply with Ida, and heard the Councillor saying at his window:

"It's beautiful, really beautiful—" and he added, looking out into the night: "And he *was* such an excellent man."

Miss Rosenfeld was going across the drive with Ida, when she suddenly felt tears on her hand:

"But why are you crying?" she asked.

The child did not answer.

The Ranger and his wife stood at the end window in a corner of the ball-room; the rockets were still soaring up, for there were plenty of them, though they were small:

"Dear me, Mother," said Lund; "how sad it is."

Very quietly Miss Rosenfeld entered the sick-room with Ida; Mrs. Brandt still sat broadly in the same place.

"We wanted to say good-night," she whispered.

And as Mrs. Brandt rose, she held Ida down to her father (Ida's eyes had the look of a very small child when it is sick). Brandt opened his eyes:

"Is that the child?" he said. "Did she see the fireworks?"

IDA SLEPT in Miss Rosenfeld's room that night. Miss Rosenfeld sat at her window, the guests had gone, and the night was dark. Then a carriage dashed out of the Steward's gate and into the road, through the gloom, like a shadow.

All the dogs began to bark.—

When they came down in the morning, the Councillor went to the piano and quietly locked it, putting the key in his pocket.

Old Brandt was dead.

The guests scattered over the garden and the woods. Miss Rosenfeld was left alone, sitting with Ida in her lap.

Over in the Steward's house Mrs. Brandt was taking many sheets out of her deep cupboards.

MRS. BRANDT sat in her drawing-room, mighty in her coal-black mourning, waiting for the carriage to arrive with Mrs. Reck, wife of the newly appointed land steward, who was to inspect her future home. The embroidered rugs were spread on all the floors, and a wreath of immortelles was hung around Brandt's portrait. Ida was over with Schröder.

Then Sofie threw open the door of the room:

"Here she is," she said; it sounded like a call to "attention," and she took her place, tall and black, behind her mistress, who opened the front door.

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Reck," said a flustered little lady, holding the skirt of her grey dress off the ground.

"Welcome," said Mrs. Brandt, slowly putting out her hand. She had always had a peasant girl's way of shaking hands, a mere touch. Now her hand was icy.

"Help the lady," she said to Sofie.

Sofie removed Mrs. Reck's cloak with her bony fingers. They entered the rooms.

"Oh, how big they are!" exclaimed Mrs. Reck, blushing even as she said it. She had paused for an instant, quite terrified at the sight of the long, countrified rooms.

"Yes, it's a roomy house," said Mrs. Brandt, offering Mrs. Reck a chair facing her. Mrs. Reck twice put her handkerchief to her forehead without knowing it, while Mrs. Brandt said something about its being cold weather for driving.

"Yes," said Mrs. Reck, "it was rather cold in the carriage."

She believed too that she had said something about Mr. Brandt and that it certainly wouldn't be easy for Reck (she was quite hot and somewhere in her head was the thought of the big rooms):

"No, it certainly won't be easy," she said once more and heard Mrs. Brandt reply:

"You see, Brandt and I were brought up on the place."

Mrs. Reck waited a moment: "Yes," she then said; "Reck and I, we're townspeople, you know."

Mrs. Brandt had undoubtedly *seen* it, but all she said was, rising to her feet:

"Perhaps you would like to take something?"

And they went into the dining-room.

Mrs. Reck didn't believe she had ever seen so much food, and she went on eating and eating, as though she dared do nothing else, while Mrs. Brandt offered her one thing after another, without taking anything herself—sitting behind a barricade of her own food.

She spoke of the mortgage on the building; "we have had to answer for it," she said in the same cold, dry

voice, still offering dishes, with her eyes inflexibly fixed on Mrs. Reck, as though she would like to choke her guest with all her food.

"Yes," said Mrs. Reck; "so much has been done here, we know—"

Mrs. Brandt replied: "There were stone floors when we came."

Mrs. Reck thought there might just as well be stone floors still.

On leaving the table they went over the house, Mrs. Brandt leading the way, opening, shutting, showing everything from room to room.

Mrs. Reck, who was shivering in her thin town dress, said: Thank you, I have seen it—but, thank you, I have seen it now, Mrs. Brandt."

But Mrs. Brandt persisted, making her see everything: cellar, milk-cellar, potato-cellar, lofts, the whole house, the whole faultless house, which was of her making and which she was to leave, she, the widow.

She spoke of the beds, their own beds, the servants' beds, the guests' beds. Mrs. Reck said:

"Oh, what a lot of things there will be to get!"

"Here are the store cupboards," said Mrs. Brandt, when at last they reached the passage.

She opened her cupboards and showed the linen, pillows, pillow-slips, curtains, making a display of her country prosperity, and raising her voice a trifle, with little twitches of the mouth, in an access of widow's spite.

Mrs. Reck thought to herself: No, she shall never cross my doorstep; and she said:

"Ah, Mrs. Brandt, if one were only so capable a woman as you."

"One must look after one's house," said Mrs. Brandt, as she locked her cupboards and put on a pair of

clogs: they were to go round the garden. On coming out they met Ida, with Schröder, who wanted to see the new Steward's wife.

"I'm housekeeper at the big house," she said, offering Mrs. Reck a red hand. Mrs. Reck felt a sort of relief and said in her kindest way, bending down to Ida, who was standing by her mother:

"This is your granddaughter, Mrs. Brandt."

"My daughter," replied Mrs. Brandt, and they all turned red at once, while Mrs. Reck made matters worse by saying:

"You *did* have a lovely garden, my dear."

"Yes," murmured Ida, pulling away her hand, which Mrs. Reck had hold of.

Nobody said any more till they came back to the door, where they saw Mrs. Mogensen, who had arrived in her pony cart, wearing her sealskin jacket. She at once overwhelmed Mrs. Reck with kisses and a flood of words, without looking at the others:

"Dearest Henriette" (they were school friends), "you sweet thing, how I've been looking forward to having someone human in the neighbourhood, one of one's own set" (they had scarcely seen each other for twelve or fifteen years), "one *has* felt the want of it, I assure you—"

The lady from the Dispensary went on:

"Yes, dear Mrs. Brandt, I'll take off my things. Henriette dearest, we have a hundred things to talk about."

She went into the drawing-room, leading the way, with her arm round Mrs. Reck, talking about the house and how glad she was and all the things there would be to get.

"You know, my dear, this *can* be made charming. Yes, Mrs. Brandt, you know I've said so often, I

couldn't bear these rooms for one hour, with all the furniture lined up against the walls."

"We were always simple folk, Mrs. Mogensen," said Mrs. Brandt, offering chairs. Ida and Schröder kept in a corner.

Mrs. Mogensen went on talking: "You really have only three rooms here. Your piano, Henriette, is a Hornung, isn't it? Yours, Mrs. Brandt, is a German one—but then, of course, it has been so little used."

She stood in the doorway between the two rooms, still talking, pointing and giving advice, placing the furniture, sweeping out the old things, affecting meanwhile the utmost friendliness to Mrs. Brandt, as though she struck her:

"*There* you will put this, and *there* you will put that, dearest Henriette—oh, it can be made charming—"

Mrs. Brandt offered them coffee in the silver coffee-pot that had been presented to Brandt on his jubilee.

Mrs. Reck in her turn grew animated and talked of her furniture and curtains and how to treat the doors, while Mrs. Mogensen moved the coffee-pot in order to draw a sketch of the Recks' rooms on Mrs. Brandt's cloth.

She asked for a yard-measure. "For you must have the measurements," she said; and Ida brought it, while Mrs. Reck stood on a chair and measured the walls, cheerfully moving about the rooms and asking Mrs. Brandt's advice.

"Don't you think so, dear Mrs. Brandt? Don't you agree, dear Mrs. Brandt?" she said every other minute, as she hung invisible curtains, arranged the new furniture and pulled the old house to pieces. Mrs. Brandt gave laconic replies, and Schröder sat gasping over her cup; the cakes seemed to swell in her mouth.

"Yes, I really think you're right; this might be made quite nice," concluded Mrs. Reck, jumping down from her chair.

Soon after Mrs. Mogensen took her home to the Dispensary in her pony cart.

She paused at the door—Mrs. Reck was already in the cart—to say good-bye:

"Well, dear Mrs. Brandt," she said, gently clasping her hand: "Of course it must be rather hard—"

She stood for a moment, looking Mrs. Brandt straight in the face, as she said once more, stroking her arm:

"Very hard indeed."

Then the pony cart drove off.

Schröder was in a hurry to get away; she did not care to be left alone with Mrs. Brandt:

"Well," she said, "good-bye, everybody. So at last the Dispensary has managed to take the measure of the Steward's house."

Schröder departed.

Mrs. Brandt washed up the china herself and put it neatly away. But all at once she sat down in a chair by the dresser. Mrs. Brandt was crying.

Ida stood staring at her: she had never seen her mother have a proper cry.

At last she gently touched her knee. And Mrs. Brandt took the child in her arms, while her tears still flowed.

But in the afternoon she walked past the Dispensary, in a mourning veil, carrying a wreath. She was going to the churchyard.—There were sounds of music within.

It was getting dark, as Schröder searched the garden, stooping over the last traces of snow; the first snowdrops were always to be seen just here.

But they were so small and hard to find.

She had gathered ten or twelve, cold and delicate. She would give them to Mrs. Brandt before she left.

She entered the Steward's house, where the rooms were stripped and naked. Ida was wandering about, wrapped in a shawl, with no place to be. It was dark and straw was spread over the floors.

"Is that you, Tut?" said Schröder, trying to strike a cheerful note.

"Yes," said Ida.

"Lord, how cold they are," said Schröder, taking her hands and rubbing them.

"Mother's in there," said Ida.

"In there" was the bedroom. They had been clearing out and packing for a week; it was like losing a piece of the house each day. In the bedroom a candle stood in a bottle on the bare window-ledge; otherwise there was only the bed and the old servant's wardrobe. On the edge of the bed sat Christen Nielsen's wife, and Mrs. Brandt was moving about in a black shawl.

Christen Nielsen came in, speaking slowly and in low tones, with his hands clasped on his stomach: "Then that's settled, about the butter and the hams—that'll be all right."

Mrs. Brandt finished her packing while he talked: now she had thought of everything, made all her arrangements.—For she would always get things cheaper from the estate, if she *had* to buy. They owed her that much, at any rate.

"Yes, yes," said Christen Nielsen's wife; "so now the time's come," and she got up from the bed.

"Yes, I suppose it has," said Schröder, laying the snowdrops on the edge of the bed. Ida, whose mittens her mother had put on, picked them up and held them

convulsively, while the other three stood still, staring at the candle in the bottle.

They heard the carriage drive up to the door, and Sofie came in, so wrapped up that only her nose could be seen. She took the candle and they all followed her through the rooms. Mrs. Brandt had drawn her great veil over her face. But Ida carried the twelve snowdrops in her mittened hand.

Out in the yard Lars stood at the horses' heads. They were the old animals, but the vehicle was the master's shooting cart, for Brandt's landau had been disposed of.

Mrs. Brandt gave orders, behind her black veil.

"I'll be back in a minute," said Schröder, and ran across to the big house.

There were many sacks and jars which had to be carefully stowed, and Mrs. Brandt continued to give orders, behind her veil. The farm bailiff came up and they all helped, nobody saying a word except Mrs. Brandt, and then Ida got into the cart, followed by her mother.

Schröder came running back. She had something for Tut, she said: it was the drawing of the house, which Miss Rosenfeld had made last summer. And Tut was to have it for a remembrance, she said, putting it into the cart, with tears in her eyes.

Then Sofie got up and Lars asked in his slow voice:

"Is there anything more, I wonder?"

There was nothing more. Ida looked such a little bit of a thing beside her broad mother, and Schröder was still in tears.

Then they drove off.

The three others stood on the doorstep and watched the cart till it was out of sight.

Without saying a word they went in, and Schröder

took up the candle, which was flickering in the passage window, and held it up to light the naked, empty rooms. Then the bailiff lit a lantern, and Schröder pinched out the candle between her fingers.

"It's painful, say what you like," said the bailiff.

They went out and locked the front-door.

"It's not so easy," said Christen Nielsen's wife, "when the breadwinner's gone."

And so they parted.—

THEN CAME Ida's childhood at Horsens. And then the first bright years of youth, and afterwards the long days of illness.

The house was just awake.

Sofie, the maid, began to rake out the kitchen grate. Ida heard it, half asleep, and mechanically put her bare feet on the knitted mat by her bed.

Now she must get up. Hans Christensen was there with the milk.

She did not light a candle, but stole gently about in the dark and got her clothes on. All she saw was her mother, who slept sitting upright in her bed, like a broad shadow covering the daylight that came through the curtains.

Hans Christensen was already in the kitchen, and he was given the milk money, which lay ready on the dresser.

"Ay, it's cold this morning," he said; "the pond's frozen solid with us."

He took a step or two in his clog-soled boots, to sound as if he was going, while Ida handed him his cup of coffee and Sofie made a clatter with her pans, in case the mistress might wake and hear that they were treating Hans Christensen to coffee.

"Good-morning," said Hans Christensen, when he

had finished, and he lifted the latch as quietly as he could.

Ida had put the frozen butter down to the fire to soften; now it was gone again. She thought as much, for she had heard stocking feet moving about in the attic last night.

She went into the drawing-room and began taking off the chair-backs and dusting the furniture, quietly moving the little lamp from place to place. This was really her best time, the mornings, while her mother was still asleep and she could do her work in peace and think her own thoughts:

Oh, there was enough to think about—there was always the trouble about money and it always had to be kept dark.— And now Hans Ole's widow was dead. So probably there would be no more gratis pork, and soon there would be none of the old ones left at Ludvigsbakke—and how could they expect the young ones to remember them?—

And now Christian of the Mill was out of work again —that always made a big difference in the housekeeping—but then it was only to be expected that Sofie should give him things, if she was fond **of** the poor man.

Ida stood in front of the mirror, stretching forward to wipe it; she had such a pronouncedly girlish way of bending her head:

And there would be the christening at Olivia's, as soon as the weather was milder. She would have to give a spoon and fork, if she was to be godmother—

She paused before the mirror, smiling:

Such thick hair the baby had, and his eyes were so exactly like Jörgensen's.

Ida was still smiling, she always had so many happy

thoughts when her mind was on Olivia and the brickworks.

She began to water the flowers and lifted them from the floor on to the window-ledge. Her mother's myrtle was so heavy, it would soon have a stem like a tree. How well it was doing; Ida always pulled off every single withered leaf. She did not know why, but that myrtle always seemed to be a memory of her father.

"Ida, Ida."

It was Mrs. Brandt waking, and Ida put down the plant:

"Yes, Mother."

Ida began to busy herself with her mother, telling her the news as she dressed her: they might expect the Lunds today—they were going to the wedding—and the pond was frozen to the bottom, Hans Christensen said—

Ida went on with her news; Mrs. Brandt only looked at her nervous hands:

"You have your father's fingers," she said; "they're all over the place."

When her hair was done, all the food in the house was brought in to be inspected, on the bed. Sofie, slow-paced and sulky, brought in dish after dish, while Mrs. Brandt sat up in bed with her hair padded out, and carefully measured the remains with her eyes.

She said nothing, but took her silent measurements, while Ida looked like a customs officer at a cash inspection and Sofie stood by the bed, stiff as a post.

"And then, Mother, the joint is to be roasted for the Lunds, isn't it?" said Ida.

"If they come," said Mrs. Brandt.

Ida resumed her mother's toilet: "But they always do come, Mother," she said; "when they're in town."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Brandt; "it's always cheaper than going to the inn."

She got out of bed and was to go into the drawing-room. Ida and Sofie had to help her, each taking an arm (Mrs. Brandt was never so heavy as when she had to be moved), and she reached the chair by the window. Her jewellery lay waiting on the table. Ida hung the watch-chain round her neck.

"The watch," said Mrs. Brandt.

"Here, Mother."

She had to have Ida's watch before her on a stand, by the side of her purse. At last they got her properly settled. The door to the kitchen was left ajar, so that she could "listen."

Mrs. Brandt bowed, acknowledging a greeting. Mr. Sörensen, the pensioned Treasurer of the Town Council, had reached his window-seat opposite and bowed. He was failing, he had greatly failed this year, Mr. Sörensen; he could hardly open his paper when he wanted to read.

Mrs. Brandt was still looking across at Mr. Sörensen. Her eyes had the same look as when she watched Ida's hands—

Then she turned her head:

"Do the Jörgensens burn coke at the brick-works?" she asked.

"Coke and coal."

"Hm," said Mrs. Brandt. "Well, I suppose wood doesn't do in those stoves of theirs."

Ida made no reply, and Mrs. Brandt said:

"But they may be very good, if only they last."

In the bedroom Sofie was making the beds, smacking them as though she wanted to punish them. She was always very severe on things when Christian of the Mill was out of work.

"It's eleven o'clock," said Mrs. Brandt.

Ida knew it; the coffee was to be filtered.

A loud voice was heard in the kitchen. It was Miss Thögersen, "housekeeper" to their neighbour, the coppersmith, a member of a German "Bachelors' Club," sworn to celibacy. She had brought the papers.

"O Jerusalem!" she said, "it's biting today—"

Her face was red and blue with cold, and her sleeves were rolled up to the elbows:

"*Ja, ja,*" she said; "I'm in the middle of my *Wäsche,* and can't get any help—"

She came into the doorway and filled it completely; the ribbons of her Scotch cap were fastened up with pins and flapped about her ears like a pair of blinkers:

"*Ja, ja,*" she said, and let loose a flood of words about her washing:

"And you know the sort of flannels Thönnichsen wears."

Miss Thögersen seated herself in a chair by the door, her stomach reposing among her distended skirts:

"And now there's trouble at Julie's," she said.

Ida was in the kitchen, and Mrs. Brandt said:

"But Mrs. Thomsen can't be so far gone yet?"

"*Ach nein, ach nein*"—Miss Thögersen moved into the basket chair, she changed chairs ten times in ten minutes—"but then there's that Maren too. She can't behave herself, and yesterday they had to send again."

Maren was the general servant at her "niece's" Mrs. Julie Thomsen's (the three results of the coppersmith's association with Miss Thögersen were always referred to as belonging to a collateral branch) and she faithfully discharged the whole duties of the house all the year round, with the exception of the ten days when the midwife was sent for. It happened almost to the day, round about the first of April.

"*Ach ja, ach ja,*" Miss Thögersen went on, and she gave further details about Maren and her case. When she had taken her seat in the basket chair she always spoke rapidly, in a half whisper, while Mrs. Brandt sat above her in her raised window-seat, immovable, with a peculiar expression on her face, as though she were sucking in the other's words through a speaking-tube.

"*Ach ja, ach ja,*" Miss Thögersen concluded, putting her hands down on her legs; "and you know, she's so respectable in other ways."

Her Slesvig accent was silent, and Mrs. Brandt allowed a few moments to pass, before asking from her height:

"Who was it this time?"

"*Gott, Gott*—ah, if she knew that—"

Miss Thögersen shook her head: "But she's so good-natured, you know," she said in explanation.

Ida came in with the coffee.

Her mother admonished her from the window-seat: "Ida, your mouth—"

Ida was apt to keep her mouth slightly open when she was carrying anything. She offered the sugar and withdrew; she preferred the more distant corners when Miss Thögersen was there.

But Miss Thögersen went on; she had so many things on her mind:

"There's Gustav too, writing from America that he wants to come home—but Thönnichsen's not an easy one to work with, no, he's not—"

Miss Thögersen uttered a groan (Gustav was one of the three): "*Ach nein,*" she said, putting down her cup; "*ach nein,* it isn't the same as if one had been to the altar."

Miss Thögersen's family gave her many worries.

The church bells began to toll for a funeral, and she jumped out of her chair:

"Bless us all—and I've got to sprinkle sand!"

"It's Christoffersen the builder," said Mrs. Brandt.

"*Ach ja, wie traurig,*" said Miss Thögersen in a changed voice; "and four children too."

"Will the widow be able to keep the house?" asked Mrs. Brandt.

Miss Thögersen didn't know; "but people are kind," she said, "to a widow—"

There was something in the word "widow" which always moved Miss Thögersen.

"Yes," said Mrs. Brandt, "and he was a freemason."

Miss Thögersen had reached Ida's seat by the window, where she suddenly exclaimed in alarm:

"*Gott, Gott,* here comes the Pastor!"

Miss Thögersen lived in perpetual terror of the clergy, on account of her irregular social position.

The Pastor went on to the house of mourning, and Miss Thögersen flew off, through all the doors. Coppersmith Thönnichsen marked the funerals of all his important customers by sprinkling sand and sprigs of box.

"Have you forgotten the cups?" said Mrs. Brandt, and Ida took them out.

Mrs. Brandt noted in her outside mirror all those who went to the house of mourning.

In Mr. Sörensen's window opposite the blind was drawn; he always found the midday sun annoying when a funeral passed in the street.

The boys returning from school ran along shouting. Olivia Jörgensen's eldest boy was in front, with the remains of a snowball over his left ear.

"Do they send him out with bare legs now?" asked Mrs. Brandt; "but I suppose it's the fashion."

"Olivia says she thinks it makes them hardy, Mother."

"*Ach*, there they are," cried Miss Thögersen from outside—she flung the last handful of sand over the curb-stone and followed it with some box.

Mrs. Brandt had already seen the hearse in her mirror: it was the *expensive* one with curtains.

The boys were still tearing along the pavement as the procession appeared.

"Oh, look at the children," said Ida.

Christoffersen's two eldest walked behind the hearse, stiff and surprised, in their new mourning clothes, preceding the clergyman, who held his white handkerchief to his nose. Pastor Robert could not bear the smell of iodine.

The procession continued to file past, while the bell tolled. Now came the last—two hunchbacked old men in grey mittens.

Mrs. Brandt took her eyes from the mirror:

"Those must be the freemasons who are paying the bill," she said.

Miss Thögersen was still standing on the coppersmith's steps. She wept bitterly every time she set eyes on a coffin.

"It's one o'clock," said Mrs. Brandt. Ida had already begun to lay the dinner, on the mahogany table, under the clock.—

An uproar rang through the house, rousing Mrs. Brandt from her after-dinner nap. It was Lund knocking the snow off his boots in the passage.

"Hullo, people!" he cried, throwing open the door of the kitchen; "here are travellers for you.—Good-day, Ida Tut, good-day, Sofie."

"Good-day, good-day—" Ida came out; her voice

had a new ring in it now. She opened the drawing-room door.

"Good-day, Mrs. Brandt," said the Ranger, less boisterously, as Mrs. Brandt rose slightly in her chair.

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Lund, who was being unpacked from a quantity of clothes, leaving two little shawls with red stripes; "it has been a lovely time. But it makes you giddy," she said; "and then I'm always so queer when I have to go in the train—"

Mrs. Lund got herself seated, and Mrs. Brandt said:

"Aren't you going to take your hat off?"

"Oh, thanks, just for a little," replied Mrs. Lund and got her hat off; her grey hair stuck out in all directions, making her look like an uncombed poodle. Meanwhile she was talking of her son's wedding:

"Yes, the wedding was held at the hotel. It's really a nice hotel at Kolding—and so clean. And there were sixty of us, just imagine—sixty people enjoying themselves. Oh, it was lovely to see how happy they all were."

"Was she in silk?" asked Mrs. Brandt.

"Oh yes, that's the way now, you know, and really there's this about it, you can always get it dyed—"

Mrs. Lund went on in rapid sentences—she always seemed rather breathless in Mrs. Brandt's basket chair —with her account of the dinner and the guests and the speech.

"It was fine, upon my soul," said Lund, tramping up and down in front of the stove.

"And the presents?" asked Mrs. Brandt.

"Oh, people have been very kind—even the cottagers sent telegrams. Oh, do sit down, Lund—"

"I must stretch my legs, hang it all," said Lund, but sat down all the same. "Yes," he said, "people have been splendid, my word, they have."

"Well," put in Mrs. Brandt, "people always remember those who have something to say."

Ida, who was laying the table again, said:

"And then there were bridesmaids."

"Seven," said the Ranger, slapping both his thighs.

"And then we saw all the boys," said Mrs. Lund, smiling; "it's so lovely to see one's children when they're grown up."

The Ranger nodded. Then after a pause he began to laugh and said:

"And I'm blessed if the daughter-in-law didn't go round and fight all her brothers-in-law after dinner, wedding veil and all—just as if they were at home."

"Well, well, Lund, that's their way, you know," said his wife. "You see, they know each other so well," she added, as a sort of explanation, turning to Mrs. Brandt.

"Yes," said Lund; "and that was the only thing that made me feel inclined to cry. It was so charming," he added in a low voice.

Ida laughed quietly—tenderly, as it were:

"How like Henriette."

She stood behind the table, smiling as though she actually saw Henriette in her white veil fighting all her brothers-in-law from sheer good spirits.

"Yes, it was charming," the Ranger repeated.

"You haven't forgotten the dinner?" asked her mother.

"No, Mother."

The table was laid, and Mrs. Brandt said, as she crossed the room—she would not use a stick, but helped herself by the chairs:

"You see, I didn't know whether we might expect you."

The Ranger plumped into his chair and looked happy at the sight of so much food.

"God be praised," he said; "there's some fodder in the manger here."

Mrs. Brandt seated herself in the big chair, facing the dishes:

"We still have something to live on," she said.

"It reminds me of the Steward's house in old days," said little Mrs. Lund, who, when she came to see Mrs. Brandt, always helped herself to a mass of food and never got through it all.

"Yes," said the Ranger; "it was pretty comfortable at old Brandt's."

"Ida, you're forgetting Mrs. Lund." Mrs. Brandt's lips quivered slightly: "We only lived according to our circumstances," she said.

Mrs. Lund piled yet more food on her crowded plate.

"Oh," she said, "how often it made me ashamed of my own house, Mrs. Brandt, when I came to see you."

Mrs. Brandt did not reply, and the Ranger began to talk of Christoffersen's funeral.

Mrs. Lund was still telling Ida about the wedding, and Ida smiled as she thought of all the Ranger's boys.

"There must have been a big crowd from what they tell me," said Lund; "ah, Christoffersen was a popular man."

"Christoffersen has always had a place where they were not particular," said Mrs. Brandt.

Lund made a rather deep gash in the ham he was carving, and the only sound was the ticking of the clocks.

"There, there," said the Ranger; "your health, Ida Tut. Here's to *your* turn, my girl—" He raised his

glass: "It's every girl's duty to go to the altar and keep up the population."

"To your turn, Ida," said Mrs. Lund. She loosened the last of the shawls.

"There's no hurry about *that*," said Mrs. Brandt; "Ida, thank God, is not one of those who have to find someone to keep them."

"Oh no, oh no," said Mrs. Lund; "I didn't mean it in that way. But we must always think of the future, Mrs. Brandt, for our children's sake."

She began to pat one of Ida's hands, which were quite cold.

"Yes," said the Ranger, "that's what we're put here for."

"Well, Lund, you know, we often had to let ours shift for themselves."

"That you never did, Mother."

"Oh yes, Lund, I know very well I did. There were so many of them and the little ones wanted looking after, so the bigger ones had to run loose.—But it's strange all the same; if they only see that you're doing what you can, and then you always seem to have a little happiness to share with them in ordinary things."

"Yes," said Lund.

Mrs. Lund's eyes still had an absent look:

"And happiness, that's always to be found in the heart, as they say, no matter how the shoe pinches—"

Ida bent her head slightly towards Mrs. Lund, and Mrs. Brandt said from her sofa:

"Yes, nowadays there's always so much talk about the children."

"Well, Mrs. Brandt," said Lund, rather loudly, "upon my soul I'd like to know what else there is to talk about, when once you've brought them into the world—"

There was a knock at the door; it was Niels, the Ranger's coachman, who had brought some parcels, and Mrs. Lund went out to the kitchen with Ida:

"It's only a trifle, my girl, but I told them they might put it in the carriage—a little ham and butter. I wonder, though, how the butter's turned out—"

"Oh, Mrs. Lund, it's far too much."

"Then we won't say anything to your mother, and you can arrange. You know, your mother *can't* get into the way of having to buy everything. And you can understand it, when she comes from a place like Ludvigsbakke."

"Yes," said Ida; "that's just it; it's so hard for Mother. And then it would hurt her so much if she knew that everyone had forgotten her there. Thank you."

"Bless me, my dear," said Mrs. Lund, "who should be nearer to you than those who were so fond of your father. But if the butter hasn't turned out right, Ida" —they went into the bedroom and shut the door— "you'll have to use it for frying."

Mrs. Lund sat on the edge of the bed and Ida by her side:

"It gives you rather a shake up," she said; "but it's been a lovely time."

She still sat holding Ida's hands, and it was growing dark indoors.

"For, you know, it was such a safe marriage. Those two had known each other from childhood."

"Yes," said Ida—they both spoke slowly and in hushed tones—"it's so lovely to see people happy."

Mrs. Lund nodded:

"It is, my dear, so lovely."

There was another knock at the outer door, but neither moved. It was Mr. Sörensen and his daughter,

back from their afternoon outing in "The Grove."

"Are we not to have the lamps?" said Mrs. Brandt from the drawing-room.

Ida lighted the lamps and returned to Mrs. Lund in the bedroom.

Mr. Sörensen seated himself in the basket chair and took off his gloves, while Mrs. Brandt followed him with her eyes. His hands were nothing but bones and veins.

"Ah, you've been to a wedding," said Sörensen.

"Yes, we have that," replied the Ranger.

"Hm, yes, it's amazing the way folks go and get married nowadays—"

"It's the way of the world, Mr. Sörensen."

"Well," and Sörensen feebly struck the floor with his stick; "it's their look-out."

He looked up at Lund:

"I've grown too old, Mr. Ranger; I don't interfere with anything."

The Ranger said something to the effect that he was a wise man.

"Wise? Yes, but" (with another tap of his stick) "what's the result? what's the result? Here I am—"

Mr. Sörensen paused for a moment and said in a lower tone:

"That's all about it."

Miss Sörensen had gone into the bedroom and taken up a position in the chair by the bed. She had opened her cloak, showing her satin-clad bosom, which towered like a barren mountain.

"Goodness me, yes," she said, " you've been to a wedding. Well, we all have so many things to think about—now there's been another offer for the house. It's Mathiesen, he's absolutely set on having it for a shop."

Miss Sörensen spoke in a whisper and her words came in a continuous stream:

"And of course the best thing would be to sell, because, when once Father's gone, I shall move to Copenhagen. There I shall have my sisters, you see. But as long as we have Father alive, Mrs. Lund, of course we shan't make any change—neither my sisters nor I."

"That's quite natural," remarked Mrs. Lund.

"It is— and that's what we think, my sisters and I. He's an old man, and nobody knows how long he may have to live."

Sörensen, who had the hearing of an owl, said to the room in general:

"So now they're after the house again. But" (he raised his voice) "I'm still here—"

He struck his stick on the floor:

"When once they get me up to the churchyard, they can do what they like. That's all about it."

In the bedroom there was dead silence.

"There you see what Father's like," whispered Miss Sörensen.

She paused for a moment with her hands in her spotless black lap and then said:

"But for us, Mrs. Lund, it's only human to think of the future—"

The old man rose from his chair; he wanted to go. The Ranger went to the steps with them, and Sörensen said, giving his arm a nudge:

"Hm, she's getting rather thick in her speech, the old woman in there. Too much fat round the heart, I should say."

"Yes, it seems to me she's going downhill," replied the Ranger.

Sörensen nodded and looked up at Lund:

"Tongue's too thick," he said. "Well, good-night."

"Good-night."

Lund returned to the drawing-room.

"My word, old Sörensen's beginning to show it," he said.

"Well, he's *old*," replied Mrs. Brandt.

Mrs. Lund and Ida were still sitting on the bed. Ida seemed to wake from a reverie and her voice quivered:

"Oh, fancy if everything here had to be sold."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lund, who was not very clear as to her own thoughts; "yes, it's so strange the way things turn out."

The Lunds had to leave; there was shopping to be done before they drove home.

Might Ida go with them?

"Because Mother will let herself be cheated by every grinning shopman," said the Ranger. "And it would do Ida Tut good to see a few people."

"Oh, I can sit by myself," said Mrs. Brandt. "But help me first."

She wanted to change her place back to the sofa. Lund offered to support her.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Brandt. "I think Ida can still help her mother."

She settled herself on the sofa.

When the Lunds and Ida reached the street, the Ranger said:

"There, my girl, now run along to your Jörgensens and air yourself a little. We'll manage the rest. Cut away now, that was the idea."

"And thanks for the things," whispered Ida, as she kissed Mrs. Lund.

As the Lunds went down the street, the Ranger, who had his wife on his arm, asked:

"Did she get the butter and the ham?"

"Yes, poor little thing."

Lund was silent for a few paces, then he said:

"I'm blessed if she doesn't *sit* on her."

"She's ill, you know, Lund—"

"But it's altogether too bad to keep the girl shut up all her best years with never a look at a man. *She* knew damned well how to go about it, when she was scrubbing as a dairymaid."

"Now, Lund."

"Yes, it's the truth. She knew the way to the men's quarters all right and the bailiff's too, before she was married—"

Lund suddenly began to laugh and pushed up his fur cap:

"But I didn't leave very much of her grub just now, my word!" he said.

"You can't say she's not hospitable, Lund."

Lund was still laughing.

"Ay, ay, my girl; at any rate she puts the stuff on the table to show she's got it."

Meanwhile Mrs. Brandt had called to Sofie.

"Take out what they've left," she said.

Ida ran in at the gate of the brick-works and rang the bell at the villa.

Inside the light hall Olivia threw open the drawing-room door—she had heard Ida's voice speaking to the servant.

"Why, it's 'the Maid,'" she cried. "How did you escape from the 'Widow's Den'?"

"It was Mother," said Ida in a rather low tone; "she thought I might come out here."

Olivia looked at her for a moment:

"Oh, that was it.—But do come in."

"Tea, Marie!" she called through the dining-room.

She put her arm round Ida's waist and walked up and down with her, as she began a long story:

Fritz was at the Town Council and Mrs. Kornerup had invited herself to tea—she was set on forming a Debating Club.

"But I won't join all these speechifying societies. As Fritz says, it's beastly to stand up and talk about all kinds of things among a lot of strangers. And after all, if it's anything that concerns oneself, there are only one or two people one can talk to—"

"Yes," said Ida.

"But you, my girl," said Olivia, "you never talk to anybody."

Two little tots came running in, shouting "Good-day!" for there was always high glee among the children when Ida appeared.

"Oh, I've brought something for them," Ida exclaimed, running out into the hall. She returned with a bag of grapes, which she emptied on the piano.

"You're as thievish as a magpie," said Olivia. "But they're your own, aren't they?" she continued coolly, putting a couple of grapes into her mouth.

Ida turned suddenly red: "There can't be any harm in giving the children some," she said; she had one of the tots on each arm. "And now we'll go up to the mite, up to the mite," she sang as she ran upstairs to the nursery, carrying the tots.

There was a great hullabaloo on the first floor, the tots laughing and the mite shrieking.

"Look at the mite, look at the mite!" cried Ida, as she came down again with the "mite" held high in her arms.

"Oh, how lovely and warm it is here," she said. She had taken a seat in the rocking-chair and was swaying

backwards and forwards with the "mite" in her lap.

"Ah yes," said Olivia, who was pouring out tea in the dining-room. You always have to keep a mean temperature at your house."

Olivia put the tea on the corner table: "There," she said, seating herself on the sofa: "and now we'll get rid of the youngsters. I like best to have them in the next room, with the door open.

"Just look at all these books," she went on, making a pile of volumes so as to have room for the cake dish. "I don't know how it is, but if I don't fill the house with them, Fritz does."

"Yes, you always have something new to read," said Ida.

Olivia sat with her head against the back of the sofa, looking at the lamp in the ceiling.

"But Fritz is right when he says there is some good in the 'new books' after all. They seem to teach one to get one's bearings, somehow."

"How do you mean?"

"With life," replied Olivia, still staring up at the lamp.

They were both silent for a few moments. Then Ida said, leaning forward in her chair and looking at the wall:

"But isn't life really quite simple and straightforward?"

"We-ell—"

"Because as far as I can see," Ida explained—she always seemed to hesitate when she had to declare anything like an opinion; "we do what we *have* to do—"

She was still staring at the wall, and Olivia said:

"And then there are the kids, you know—if one

could learn something for their sake. Well"—with a sudden smile all over her face—"I don't suppose I ever had any education, as far as that goes."

She glanced involuntarily at Mrs. Franck's portrait over the piano and added, still smiling:

"We were always together, that was all."

She sat still and was beginning to hum softly, when Ida, whose thoughts had somehow returned to her own home, said all at once:

"Oh, now Christian of the Mill is out of work again."

"Well, God have mercy on your butter-crocks!" Olivia laughed. "So now no doubt he's lodging 'upstairs'?"

"Yes," replied Ida, looking at her with a trace of embarrassment; "but what am I to do? I suppose he has nowhere else to go."

Olivia merely laughed. But Ida said slowly:

"But all the same it makes so many things that have to be kept from Mother."

Olivia gave a little sigh:

"There can't be any other house in the world where you'd learn to tell such thumping lies."

Then she jumped up: "Shall we play a duet?"

As they sat down to the piano with the music before them, she flew off to another idea:

"Oh, I say, now the mite's to be christened. And as Fritz says, it doesn't matter about the weather, as long as they put warm water in the font."

They had not been playing long when there was a ring at the bell. It was Mrs. Kornerup who threw open the door:

"Oh, my dear, how cold it is out," she said.

Soon after Ida left.

As she ran up the steps at home, Christian of the Mill sneaked in by the tradesmen's entrance.

Mrs. Brandt was sitting on the sofa, unoccupied and imposing.

"You were a long time," she said; "where did you go?"

Ida mentioned various shops, in a rather drawling voice, and Mrs. Brandt asked:

"Did Lund bring you back?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Then who was it you were talking to outside?"

"The Miss Staals."

"Hm, do those two girls go out by themselves?"

"Shall I read to you, Mother?" asked Ida. She took up the paper and began in a clear voice to read the advertisements on the back page: "Situations vacant" and "Articles for sale and wanted." Mrs. Brandt always wanted to hear these first, as she sat with her hands in her lap, with eyes that seemed to penetrate the walls of all the houses where there was a change of servants.

Ida passed to the local news, reading on in the same tone without a pause:

" 'Sale of property at Bræstrup'—'Rape at Hatting'—"

"Who's dead?" asked Mrs. Brandt, interrupting.

Ida read out the three deaths, and Mrs. Brandt said:

"Now take the story."

Her features relaxed and her eyes began to swim.

When Ida had finished reading she gave her mother the patience cards and went out to make tea. But soon after Mrs. Brandt called:

"Sofie! Bring me the paper."

Mrs. Brandt spread the paper over her cards; she was reading about the rape at Hatting.—

Mrs. Brandt was in bed, and Ida sat in the next room, with the door open, where she could hear her mother's breathing. She was thinking of the "mite's"

christening. Yes, she would *have* to squeeze some money out of the big savings bank book.

"Ida," came the voice from the bed; "what was there in the parcels?"

"What parcels?"

"The Ranger's Niels brought some parcels."

Ida said:

"They were for Mrs. Lund."

Her mother's breathing became deeper; the whole house was still, except for a rustling and creaking in the attic.

Ida had taken a book out of her own drawer in the bureau. At night was the only time she dared read any of Olivia's books.

Sofie came in and sat down in the chair by the stove. For a long while Ida heard her sighing and sniffling. Then she looked up from her book, marking her place with her knitting-needle.

"But can't he really get any place, Sofie?" she said.

Sofie began to sniff more loudly on being addressed.

"O dear, O dear, he's got no character, you see," she said.

Sofie wept on—she wept as a man weeps:

"But I'd like so much to ask you, miss, if I might go to communion—next Sunday."

She sobbed aloud.

"Yes, yes," said Ida; "yes, yes, Sofie."

Sofie always made that request when things were at their worst and Christian was unemployed.

Sofie wept on, thinking of her own affairs:

"Ay, so it is," she said, "so it is; but a poor creature can't keep her bed to herself like other people."

Ida sat staring at the lamp; she was so used to Sofie's confidences. Then suddenly Sofie said, in a totally different tone:

"You must take some money this evening, miss—we haven't a penny in the house."

"Again?" said Ida.

"If we can never say when we buy anything—and we have to make the mistress think we get it all given us for nothing—"

Ida sat in silence for a while. Then she closed her book:

"Well," she said; "then we'd better lock up."

She locked the door and put the pots of flowers on the floor and spread the white covers over all the chairs. What a lot of talking there was in the street—it was the people coming back from the theatre.

Hm, how handsome he was, the one who played Palle that evening she went with Olivia—so tall and slight and dark.

She always retained the actors' faces for a long time, and their smiles and the way they walked.

Such lovely teeth he had when he smiled.—

Ida stole into the bedroom. She undressed without a sound, listening to her mother's breathing: now she was fast asleep.

Ida lay in her bed and, very gently, slipped her hand under her mother's pillow, where her purse lay. In the dark she got out two two-crown pieces and put the purse back.

Her mother never counted any but the small coins.

Now it was perfectly still; nothing but her mother's groaning in all the house. Ida hid the two coins in her stocking.

Ida was in the kitchen garden at Ludvigsbakke; she and Schröder were picking peas with a huge basket.

"There," said Schröder, "now it's struck nine."

She had seen Mrs. von Eichbaum, stiff and erect,

turning into the path by the pea-beds. Mrs. von Eichbaum, who had been to Aix-les-Bains, was making her usual after-cure at Ludvigsbakke, and she kept her time-table to the minute.

She came along the pathway with even steps, as though counting them:

"Oh, is that little Brandt?" she said without stopping in her walk. She seemed to rediscover Ida in the most friendly way, every time she saw her.

"Hm," said Schröder, following her with his eyes; "she'd better see and get that son of hers out of his feather bed. God knows what she's to do with him now."

It was a fortnight since Karl von Eichbaum had been ploughed for the second time at the Polytechnic at Zürich, and now he was resting after his labours.

"But he has a nice figure," said Schröder.

It was very still in the garden, each pod could be heard as it fell into the basket, while the white butterflies flitted among the rows of peas.

"How lovely the air is," said Ida.

"Pff—it's getting hot, and I've got to stir mince."

Schröder was always stirring mince; the old Councillor, who was near ninety, could hardly take anything else. "There soon won't be a whole tooth in the house," said Schröder. She herself had had six new front teeth put in that spring. Otherwise she was unchanged; and on the days when she was busiest the six never came out of their glass of water either.

"But I wouldn't have him knocking about where there are any young females," said Schröder, still on the subject of Eichbaum; "the way he fixes his eyes on a girl."— Schröder had not failed to notice the air with which the maids swung themselves when Eichbaum set foot in the kitchen.

"I think his eyes have such a kind look," said Ida.

There was a chorus of children's voices, roaring and screaming down by the pond.

"There," said Schröder, "now we shall have cadets' trousers to dry again."

It was all the Falkenbergs' children paddling in the pond, and Mrs. Falkenberg, *née* With, came along the path to "see after the children."

"Oh, are you sitting here?" she said (she spoke in a faintly playful girlish voice) ; "how lovely it is here in the sun—"

She sat down on Schröder's kitchen stool with her hands in her lap.

"Falkenberg's not coming this year," she said.

"No?"

"No, he writes that he has some reports to do—" she raised her pointed shoulders in her morning wrap. Mrs. Falkenberg had positively recovered her childish figure through presenting Captain Falkenberg, Knight of the Dannebrog, with five children.

"I don't understand these things, you know," she said. "It's the Service."

"Yes," said Schröder; "a man has such a lot of things."

"Yes," said Mrs. Falkenberg, nodding—her eyes had an expression of wonder, as though they were looking for something that was lost; "they have *their* affairs."

Down by the pond they were laughing and shouting. Then a boy began to cry.

"That's Edvard," said Mrs. Falkenberg, making as though to rise.

"Let me go," said Ida, getting up.

"Oh yes, little Ida—would you mind?" said Mrs. Falkenberg, keeping her seat.

Schröder sat down on Ida's stool and went on picking the peas, while Mrs. Falkenberg looked on with her handsome eyes.

"Oh, you have such a lot to think about," she said, watching Schröder's hands. "Yes, it must be lovely to have strength for it all—"

Ida came back: it was nothing, they were only quarrelling over the boat.

"Was Erik there?" asked Mrs. Falkenberg.

"No, Mrs. Falkenberg, I didn't see him."

"Hm," Mrs. Falkenberg shook her head; "goodness knows what that boy's up to—"

Erik was an overgrown lad of seventeen, who spent his holidays in one or other of the lofts with modern novels for company, and who always looked, on leaving his overheated hiding-places, as though the light hurt his eyes.

Mrs. Falkenberg gazed out into the sunshine.

"Ah yes," she said, "it's strange about children. It's lovely when they're small, but then one has to send them to school—"

As long as her children were small, Mrs. Falkenberg sang and fussed about them all day long, but as soon as they had to go to school a great door seemed to close behind them—

"You can't exactly follow them," she said.

"No, every pig runs his own way," said Schröder; "catch hold."

She took one side of the basket and Ida the other, and they went off.

Mrs. Falkenberg stayed where she was. She would sit by the hour in a sunny place, gazing before her, as though she were looking into some great abyss in which all the things of life vanished.

Miss Rosenfeld sat in the veranda reading. She raised

her head and nodded to Ida and Schröder, and then resumed her reading.

As Schröder and Ida entered the kitchen, Karl von Eichbaum put his head in at the other door: "I wouldn't mind some tea, Schröder," he said; and Schröder, putting down the peas, muttered something about their wanting tea for dinner next. But Ida got a tea-tray ready and carried it out to von Eichbaum, who was lying at full length on the lawn.

"You're always the kind one," he said. He had an easy and civil way of his own when speaking to Ida. And he turned over on his stomach, with his head over the tea-cup: "Thanks," he said.

Ida offered him cakes.

"Is today Wednesday?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Ugh," said Eichbaum, stirring his tea; "then there's three weeks more. And the Lord knows how to get through them."

Karl von Eichbaum turned over on his back:

"No, it's incredible," he said.

He stared up at the sky again, doubtless meditating how he was to "get through them."

Ida went into the kitchen and lent a hand. She was thinking all the time of Karl von Eichbaum: It was true, he had nobody now to be chums with. There used to be Herman Reck. But now he had settled down, in Aalborg, and never came home any more.

There was a sound of knocking on the ceiling; it was the Councillor, calling from the "boudoir"; he never left his chair now and called people by knocking with his stick.

"Oh, is it you, little Ida?" he said. "Are they all out of doors?"

"Yes, sir."

All visitors at Ludvigsbakke had to be out in the open air.

"Fresh air for young people," said the Councillor; "so that they can feel their blood circulating—young people ought to have big lungs and strong hearts."

He nodded: "Now open the doors."

Ida opened the doors through the whole range of sunny rooms. "Thank you," said the Councillor. Now he could sit in his wife's chair and look down all the bright rooms which he had built and in which he had passed his life.

He turned his head to the window: through an opening in the trees he could see into the land steward's garden:

"*They're* a motley crew," he said with a nod.

Four ladies in all the colours of the rainbow were running about Reck's croquet lawn in company with three young fellows in turned-up trousers.

"They're not your father's sort, my dear," he said.

"Well, well"—he turned his eyes back to his own quiet rooms—"one must expect to see a great many things if one lives to be old.

"But the world, my dear," said the old man, "can put up with a lot of nonsense, and still it goes on."

Ida too had been looking into the garden of the "Steward's Wing." She went there so seldom now; but what an amount of felling there had been—so few of the old trees were left.

"And how are things at home?" asked the Councillor.

"Thank you, I haven't heard just lately," said Ida.

"Ah, well, well—"

The Councillor relapsed into silence, meditating after the manner of one who has had a long life.

Ida went back to the kitchen, but Schröder turned her out.

"You're on a holiday, my girl," she said; "go out and air yourself. It's so warm in here that you have to throw off your clothes."

Schröder was standing over the mince and had thrown them off.

Ida went out. She thought of going over to the Lunds. But on reaching the front steps she stopped: a harvest waggon was leaving the farmyard with all the children, who were going to bathe. In the sunshine the waggon looked like a teeming white nest.

The voices died away and all was still again. Lawns and fields, with the cows resting lazily and the houses of Bræstrup—all seemed to be dozing in the bright light.

"It's beautiful today," said Miss Rosenfeld, who came up slowly with her book under her arm.

They stood side by side on the steps:

"How straight the smoke goes up," said Miss Rosenfeld.

The smoke rose from the houses of Bræstrup, still and straight, like pale blue torches in the pale blue air.

Ida and Miss Rosenfeld seldom spoke much when they met. But they often stood side by side like this, and they looked at the same things. Miss Rosenfeld fetched Ida when she was going for a walk, especially after rain and when the trees were still dripping—and then they would walk for a long time on the damp paths, saying little.

Ida went through the garden and came into the forest road. The birds no longer sang, and she heard nothing but her own footsteps on the dusty ground.

At the Ranger's house old Lucie sat at the scullery

door peeling potatoes, and the yard dog, who knew Ida, wagged his tail at her in front of his kennel.

"Is anyone at home, Lucie?"

Lucie raised her rocking head:

"They're in there," she said, and went on with her work.

All the doors stood open and the sunlight fell upon the floors and the worn furniture. In the sitting-room Mrs. Lund sat in a cane chair, surrounded by linen and with her big spectacles on her little face.

"Oh, is it you, child?" she said. "I'm patching sheets, my girl. We wash and we patch, you know—with all these visitors. But they're very welcome, I'm sure. Oh, can you help me—"

Ida helped and threaded the needle, as she thought to herself: but how Mrs. Lund's hand shakes!

"Dear me, yes," said Mrs. Lund, who was searching for holes in the sheets, and there were many of them; "these must be some of the oldest. But it's holiday time, my dear, and it still seems like the old home—and who knows how long it will go on—

"The children are in the garden," she said, setting to work again.

They could hear them; a chorus of bright voices rang outside. Indoors a mass of flies were buzzing; they had left their marks on the whitewashed ceiling.

"No," Mrs. Lund went on; "the Councillor's greatly failed, and who knows what's to become of us."

Ida did not know why she had suddenly had the same idea. But she said:

"But the woods will still be here, Mrs. Lund."

"Oh yes, child, but it'll be someone else who'll fell the trees."

Mrs. Lund's eyes had an absent look behind the big spectacles, which sat so uncomfortably on her nose:

"And now we shall soon have lived here five and thirty years in peace."

Old Lucie came along the passage, scolding and muttering.

"There," said Mrs. Lund, "now Lucie's scolding again. Oh, my dear, it isn't easy. If only she would keep quiet and not do anything. But she will have a hand in everything, and she's not clean. Now she's standing over the food, and now she's making the beds—"

Mrs. Lund shook her head and Ida smiled against her will: there were plenty of people in the neighbourhood who shied at a meal at the Ranger's, because Lucie stood over the food.

"But," said Mrs. Lund, "as I tell Lund, she must be allowed to end her days here."

"The Student," the youngest of the boys, put his head in at the garden door:

"Is that Ida?" he said; "come out, come out. We're picking cherries."

All the young people were laughing and shouting around the cherry-trees. Two of the boys were hanging in the branches picking the cherries and throwing them down.

"Is that Ida?" called one of them.

"Hallo!" Ida got two cherries in her upturned face.

The girls caught the cherries, laughing.

"Oh, oh!"—the cherries flew.

"Oh, oh!"—How smartly Emilie Frederiksen could catch.

"There!" one of the boys let himself drop from his branch into the middle of the group.

"More for you!" cried the other, throwing a handful of cherries to Ida. But now they were all lying on the grass under the trees.

"Oh, how jolly it is!" said Emilie, stretching her feet as far as she could.

"Yes," said Ida, almost with tears in her eyes; she did not know how it was she had come into this mood—of sadness or a kind of anxiety—ever since she sat down with Mrs. Lund.

Emilie looked down at her skirt, which bore the marks of three crushed cherries.

"That'll never come out," she said, beating her skirt.

Ida got up; she would rather go home—such a queer feeling had come over her—

"Well, well, my girl," said Mrs. Lund, who went with her to the door and stood there nodding; "remember me when you write."

As Ida came into the forest road she met Reck's waggonette, full of ladies with bright-colored parasols. Miss Constance Reck, who sat on the box with a slender ivory whip in her hand, pulled up the horses with a greeting.

Ida made some reply, and Miss Constance said:

"It must be awfully nice for Miss Schröder to have you here."

Miss Constance waved her whip and there was a slight movement of the parasols, as the carriage drove on.

Ida resumed her way. She was lost in thought and turned in by the Steward's Wing without knowing it.

Two of the young men stood on the big new veranda, leaning against the door-posts, with their trousers rolled half-way up their calves, showing their gaudy socks, and smoking cigarettes. One of them took off his white felt hat, and soon after the other followed his example; while Ida heard him say, as she went past:

"Was *that* Miss Brandt?"

Ida increased her pace. She had a sort of idea all the

time that something must have happened at the house, and she said to the parlourmaid as she came in:

"Is everything all right?"

The parlourmaid, who was carrying in flowers for the table replied:

"Yes, dinner's just ready."

And Ida became quite calm again, as she changed her dress. Outside on the path she heard the rustle of a skirt. It was Mrs. von Eichbaum taking her regulation walk before dinner.

Ida was standing before her glass when the gong sounded.

This was surely the worst time for Karl von Eichbaum, she thought, dinner-time.

Schröder stood by the open kitchen window pouring the soup into the tureens, when she saw a bare-footed boy come up over the lawn.

"Who's it for?" she called out of the window, past the two maids who were waiting.

It was the telegraph messenger; but the boy was in no hurry.

"It's for Miss Brandt," he said.

"Who?"

"It's for Miss Brandt," the boy replied, as slowly as before.

"O dear, O dear," Schröder put down the big saucepan; "then it's bad news."

"Where is she?" she said a moment later, but added at once: "Well, let me pour this out first."

One of the maids took the telegram; she would see to it.

"Are you mad?" said Schröder, snatching it from her. "Take in the soup."

Schröder recovered her presence of mind: she would

tell Johan the coachman to hold himself in readiness, in case; and she went into the servants' hall, where he sat waiting for his coffee.

She'll get her dinner first anyhow, thought Schröder, and suddenly she burst into tears:

"Poor little thing," she said.

When she came back with tears in her eyes, Ida was in the kitchen.

"Whatever is the matter, Schröder?" she asked. "What is it?" she repeated with growing anxiety. And as Schröder in her confusion handed her the telegram without thinking, she said:

"It's Mother—" and she tore open the telegram and read it.

"There, there, little Tut," said Schröder, putting her arm around her.

Ida had not uttered a word. It was as though her eyes could see nothing, as she went into Schröder's little room.

"Little Tut," Schröder kept saying; "little Tut—how is she?"

But Ida made no reply, and Schröder, terrified at her pale and rigid face, could only repeat the old pet name: "little Tut, little Tut," rocking Ida's head backwards and forwards, as though trying to shake the tears out of her:

"I've given orders about the carriage."

"Thanks." And Ida gave voice to her only thought: "If only I'm in time to see her."

Speaking brought on her tears, much to the relief of Schröder—who had had no idea whether Mrs. Brandt was still alive or not:

"Oh yes, you will—of course it's not so bad as that—she'll get over it, you'll see, little Tut."

Ida dropped her arms wearily against the sides of the chair:

"You must go," she said. "They'll be waiting for you upstairs."

"Well," said Schröder, almost angrily, "they can bide a while."

The door opened; it was Miss Rosenfeld.

"Is the carriage ordered?" she asked in a hushed tone, as though she had entered a sick-room.

"Yes."

She nodded to Schröder, who went out.

"We'll start at once," she said, sitting down quietly and taking Ida's cold hands.

Anne Marie, the cook, had stolen from the kitchen into the servants' hall to hear what was happening.

"Then it's all over, is it?" she said slowly.

"That's what it means," replied Johan.

Anne Marie stood straight up in her black stocking feet, with an absorbed look in her eyes:

"She'll get something," she said with a nod.

"She'll get a *lot*," replied Johan. "Well," and he stretched out his artilleryman's legs; "what about that coffee?" He drank it and got ready to go.

"Let's see," he said; "I suppose we take the landau for an occasion like this."

As a rule Ida was fetched and sent away in the chaise.

There was silence at the dinner-table upstairs, while Mrs. Falkenberg served the Councillor in the other room, leaving the doors ajar.

"Why aren't they enjoying themselves?" said the Councillor.

"But we *are* enjoying ourselves."

"Are you? But when people are enjoying themselves they generally let you *hear* it," said the old man.

Mrs. von Eichbaum had lately been reading what Mynster wrote in his "Meditations" about sudden death—"words that one did not easily forget," she said.

"But," she added; "little Brandt's future is well assured."

When the carriage drove up on the gravel sweep, Ida got in quietly, and Miss Rosenfeld, who had put on her things, seated herself beside her.

"You must not have the journey by yourself," she said.

Karl von Eichbaum had left the table and come down. He stood by the horses' heads, with the farm bailiff. Then he gave Ida his hand over the carriage door without saying anything.

When Schröder turned to go in—the carriage was now right out on the Bræstrup road—she saw the telegraph boy still sitting on the bench outside the kitchen windows; he was waiting for his receipt.

Dinner was over upstairs and the kitchen tables were a mass of dishes and plates. Schröder had to have them out of the way before she could start on the servants' supper. The sunlight betrayed some grey hairs about her temples, as she stood bending over the big bread-cutting machine.

The under gardener came up and raked the gravel, slowly effacing the wheel-marks of the vanished carriage.—

The white mile-stones flew past the jingling carriage. Mile followed mile, as the horses trotted on.

Ida saw nothing, heard nothing. All her life seemed concentrated in her clasped hands.

She had but one thought, which expressed itself in silent words, as though she were trying to rid herself of blame:

"I did say I wouldn't go away—"

She beat her clasped hands up and down.

"Now I shall not see her again—"

"But, Ida."

"No, I shall not see her again—"

Then they were there.

The horses would not stand still, two dogs rushed at them. Ida saw nothing but Sofie's swollen face, as she came down the steps.

"The Doctor's here," said Sofie in a whisper.

Ida supported herself against the banisters: so she was not dead.

"I'll go and fetch Mrs. Jörgensen," said Miss Rosenfeld.

Ida nodded without having heard, and opened the drawing-room door; it was dark and she paused there; she heard the Doctor's footsteps in the bedroom.

"It came on at twelve o'clock," whispered Sofie.

But Ida only sobbed.

"And then we telegraphed," whispered Sofie again.

Ida saw, as a pair of shadows, Miss Sörensen carrying two silver candlesticks, and Miss Thögersen with a cloth.

"Oh," said Sofie, beginning to tremble; "it's for the last sacrament." And she sat down on a chair.

"We're waiting for the Pastor," whispered Miss Sörensen, and the two stole about continually—there were so many things to bring.

Ida was only listening to the Doctor's footsteps.

Then came the sound of her mother's breathing, heavy, as she knew it—as she knew it.— And all at once Ida began to sob, in quiet abandonment—from gratitude.

The Doctor came towards her, she made an effort to rise.

"I heard the carriage," he said, as she looked up in his face.

"Perhaps it would be better if you did not go in at once," he said. "You see, your mother has shown a good deal of irritation—"

Ida still had her eyes fixed on him:

"In her condition—about your being away—"

Ida made no reply. For an instant she had closed her eyes and she did not feel the hand he gave her:

"We'll wait till this evening. Good-bye."

Ida bowed her head. She understood—she was not to go in.

She saw Miss Sörensen drag herself across the room with the myrtle, and she heard the Doctor's voice again:

"Let that be," he said, and he actually struck at the myrtle.

Ida's only thought was—she was not to go in.

Without knowing it she had risen and gone into the little room, to the footstool, *her* footstool, behind the big bureau.

Doors were opened and doors were shut, there was a sound of footsteps. Miss Thögersen came in and clutched her shoulder convulsively.

"The Pastor," she said breathlessly, and they heard Sofie weeping:

"Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ!"

But Ida did not move.

There was no other sound but the mumbling of the clergyman. Then came the sick woman's breathing. Ida heard that alone.

"*Vater unser, Vater unser*," Miss Thögersen prayed in her native tongue, and got no further.

"Jesus Christ, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is

my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Ida did not pray; she had no room for prayers. She only felt her heart stop still, heavy as a stone in her breast.

"*Vater unser, Vater unser—*"

But the Pastor went on:

"Likewise after supper he took the cup; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Sofie watched through the door as the clergyman bent over the dying woman and raised her pillow.

"God the Holy Ghost, God the Holy Ghost," she whispered, and sank against the back of her chair. There was a minute's silence; then Sofie started forward again:

"The keys!" she exclaimed all at once, almost in a scream.

She had seen the bunch of keys slide out from under the dying woman's pillow; they slipped over the sheet and fell upon the floor.

"The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ—"

They heard no more, but even the nurse began to weep.

Ida had folded her hands in her lap:

If her mother fell asleep, she could go in; while she was asleep, she could go in—

"The Lord be with thee, the Lord bless and keep thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

There was perfect silence. Miss Thögersen had left off crying and sat rocking her head:

"But she's dying like a respectable person," she said, and her tears began to flow again.

Ida heard her name as though through a mist and stood up. It was the Pastor, offering her his hand.

"You have been away?" he said in a voice of mild anxiety.

"Yes, Pastor Schmidt."

The Pastor paused for a moment before her tearless face. He was trying to think of a text, but could not find what he wanted.

"Yes," he said at last; "a mother is a mother. God give you strength."—

There was silence in the house. Nothing could be heard but the ticking of the clocks and the nurse moving softly about.

Ida sat in the same place, while Sofie stole to and fro.

"Is she asleep?" whispered Ida.

"She is still awake."

Again they heard the ticking of the clocks, and Sofie lighted a single candle, whose long spikes of stearine bent over into the flame and fell.

"Is she asleep?" asked Ida again.

"She is awake."

They heard the gasping breath and the muttering of a voice.

"Is she speaking?" asked Ida.

She had risen to her feet. She felt her hope almost like a stab in the breast, as the nurse opened the door.

"Has she asked for me?" Ida could scarcely speak.

The nurse shook her head:

"She will ask for no one any more," she said. "Now she is asleep."

They listened for a while, all three, by the calm candle: she slept.

"Then I will go in," whispered Ida.

She cautiously took off her shoes and slipped in. For a moment she looked at her mother's face. Then she sat down, quietly, at the foot of her own bed, on the floor—without drawing breath.

The Widow Brandt did not wake again. About midnight she passed away.

Now THE HOUSE was cold and empty; from room to room only the dead, white boards of the floor; on the walls nothing but rusty nails and the marks where pictures had been.

Ida had gone from room to room, for the last time.

"Well, then you will lock up," she said to Sofie.

Sofie paused with her hand on the door-knob.

"Yes," she said, and her tears flowed in streams as she spoke: "I haven't had a chance to tell you, miss—but it's come to this—we're going to get married—"

"Married? But—why, he hasn't a penny, Sofie." (Christian of the Mill was getting worse and worse and now he was always out of work.)

"No," said Sofie, still in tears; "but, you see, Hansen's wanted it a long time—and then there'll be his three children to look after—"

"Yes," said Ida, who had not grasped till now that it was not Christian of the Mill at all; the widower Hansen was employed at the gas works and he drank.

Sofie, still sniffling, said, as though she could read Ida's thoughts:

"And it isn't everybody, Ida, that can live by themselves."

Ida looked at her. She did not know why the tears came into her eyes.

"May it bring you happiness," she said.

Sofie gazed before her with a vacant look in her red eyes; her voice had a totally different sound:

"It means a house and a bed anyhow," she said. "And a body must live."

She had another fit of weeping, and in despair Ida threw her arms round the old girl and wept too—she scarcely knew why.

Then Sofie slowly closed all the doors, one after another, and went out.

She slept with Miss Thögersen that night.—

Ida had returned to the Villa and they had eaten their last supper.

Now Olivia and she were sitting on the steps of the veranda, looking out in the twilight at the Sound and Boller Wood, which lay as a dark outline across the water. They had not spoken. Olivia had merely slipped her arm under Ida's and they sat leaning shoulder against shoulder.

Inside the veranda they heard Jörgensen's rocking-chair swaying backwards and forwards. Rolf, the dog, stole down the steps and lay at Olivia's feet.

"So I suppose I shall take to nursing," said Ida.

"But why, Ida? You don't need to do it."

Ida looked out over the darkening Sound and her voice came very low:

"It seems to be—the only thing I'm capable of."

Olivia did not reply and they sat in silence for a few moments.

"And then I shall be of some use—"

Ida suddenly thought of Sofie and said, still in the same voice:

"Sofie's going to get married."

"To Christian?" asked Olivia, raising her voice.

"No, to Hansen of the gas works."

"Oh, my God," said Olivia; "is she going to be saddled with *him* now?"

"Yes," said Ida with a half smile; "she evidently can't live without some trouble."

They were silent once more and heard nothing but the deep breathing of the dog lying at their feet.

"How quiet Rolf is."

"Yes."

They both spoke in whispers. In the dusk of the garden not a leaf moved.

"Everything seems to know that you are going away."

They did not move. But Olivia felt a tear or two fall upon her hand in the darkness.

"Let us go up to the children," said Ida.

They stood for a moment longer looking out over the resting sea. Then they went in.

Ida ran on ahead to her own room; then they stole in to the sleeping children. The hanging lamp burned dimly and the nursemaid sat knitting in a corner.

"How sweet they are," said Olivia.

Ida said nothing, but stayed a long time by each of the white cots.

"What are you doing?" whispered Olivia.

Ida put a little sealed packet under each of the pillows.

"You do nothing but give," said Olivia.

Ida was standing by the "mite's" cot.

"If only one had someone to give to," she said.

They went down to the drawing-room, and Olivia told Fritz about the packets.

"I may surely be allowed that," said Ida; "on my last evening."

"Well, all right," said Olivia with a laugh. "But if ever you fall in love, my girl, you'll give him your chemise and all."

Olivia had gone up with Ida to the spare room and returned to the quiet drawing-room. She and Fritz sat in silence, one on each side of the white stove.

"You know," said Olivia, "I do wish Ida could be happy."

Fritz watched the smoke of his cigar for a moment before he answered:

"She'll never be that."

"But why?" she asked.

"Because I don't think she'll ever learn to look after herself," said Fritz.

"No."

They were silent again, till Olivia said, in a voice that showed great emotion:

"Oh, but how grateful the happy ones ought to be!"

Fritz merely nodded. But Olivia said, as though the words came from the depths of her being:

"And yet death comes to them too."

THE NEXT AFTERNOON Ida left by the steamer.—

It was beginning to grow dark—her first day in Copenhagen. Ida had been moving in strange surroundings and had sat at table with strange people. Now she went out, through streets and squares. She wanted to look at the ship *Brage* which was sailing again for home.

She walked along the quay, where ship after ship was lying. *There* lay the boat, last of all. She stood and looked at everything, at the great hull and the masts and the cabin doors, which were closed.

The *Brage* was going home and would soon be gliding through the home waters.

Winches were working and the cargo was still being stowed. The ship would pass the beach and the woods and all the lovely fields—

And Karen the bathing woman would stand watching

her come in and would hoist the flag at the white bathing house.

Ida could not leave the quay. She took refuge under the eaves of the big warehouse. *There* she was in darkness.

Ida tossed in her bed. Now she was dreaming and now she was awake.

It seemed that, between dozing and waking, she had tonight relived her whole life until now.—

The gates of the hospital boomed as they opened and shut. The porters were bringing in patients.

Two long-drawn screams came from the "violent corridor" and filled the house—then the doors fell to.

Half-dozing, Ida heard the footsteps of the porters and the screams of the violent, as though they came from far, far below, from under the earth.—

Part Two

"NOW THEN, Holm, dip your fingers in."

The four patients from the Men's Ward had been got out of bed and stood in the anteroom, each with his basin of water. Josefine put down the breakfast tray and gave Holm a smart rap across both wrists, dashing his wrinkled hands into the basin.

"That's right," she said; "down with your paws."

Josefine gave him another rap and stood there, high-bosomed and full of health, with her hands on her hips, while Bertelsen, heavy and silent, splashed the water about his powerful neck.

"Look happy, Bertelsen," she said; "the sun's shining."

In the morning there was something fresh and full about Josefine's voice, which seemed to announce that she came from the outer world and passed her nights outside the building.

"Good-morning, miss."

Josefine nodded into the ward, where Ida was sitting on the sunny bed of one of the two old men, and turned on her heel—Josefine brought heels of rather more than the regulation height into the hospital.

"Good-morning, Josefine."

"There," said Ida, drying the old man's hands; "now you'll do, Sörensen."

The old man smiled and nodded.

The keys jingled briskly in the doors: "Good-morning, good-morning—what lovely weather." It was Miss Kjær, ruddy-cheeked and cheery, who put her head in through the door of the Women's Ward.

"Lovely," said Ida, washing down the wainscot, which was warmed by the sun, while Miss Kjær dashed out through the kitchen.

"Is Petersen up?" she cried, banging at Petersen's door.

"*Ach, wie schön* it is over the Lakes," said Miss Petersen behind her locked door. Miss Petersen did not care to have visitors in the morning, while she was elaborately occupied with her thirty-five-year-old person and arraying herself in very white and youthful underclothes.

"Talk Danish, you German woman," cried Miss Kjær, banging again at the door.

Her keys jangled once more and she was gone.

Ida cleared away the basins, in busy haste, and buttered bread for them all. Yes, today it would be lovely by the Lakes. There was nothing better than the morning run after night duty.

She went round humming and chatting to each of them as she brought the breakfast, and finally opened the door of "A," where it was still dark.

"Good-morning, Doctor," she said.

Ida opened the shutters, so that the light filled the room like a stream; but the sick man still lay silent, with his long, pale hands motionless on the coverlet. Ida attended to him, and he said his invariable Thanks in his usual voice (he always said it in a tone that seemed to show deep compassion with the person he thanked), as he raised his watchful eyes, which followed her movements and not the play of the sunlight.

Ida went on talking, gaily:

"Now I'm going for a walk," she said.

The sick man only nodded:

"Yes," he said; "the sunshine is tempting."

Ida laughed: "Yes, after night duty. Good-morning."

Miss Petersen had come out, starched and cleaned, and took over her work.

"Then I'll go now," said Ida, opening the door of the passage, where the morning air, fresh and strong, swept in through the open window.

Ida ran up the stairs to her bedroom in the gable. The jingling of her bunch of keys sounded like a peal of merry little bells as she ran.

Up in her room she threw the window open: how fresh it was, and all the bushes in the gardens were gleaming.

She stood for a moment at the window and all at once she smiled. She was thinking of Karl von Eichbaum, who had said when they met the morning before:

"Well, now I really believe we're going to have spring."

And they had both laughed, and she had told him about Mrs. Franck, in old days, who would open a crack of her window round about Twelfth Day, when the sun shone, and sit with her nose in the open air, saying: "Now I can smell the spring, children."

Ida was still smiling: she had thought so often lately of all the old days and of that year, that lovely year, before her mother fell ill; and all the other years seemed almost as if they had never been—only that time, that bright time—

It must be because she had met them again, nearly all of them, the people she remembered at home at Ludvigsbakke—Miss Rosenfeld, who had been to see her, and Karl von Eichbaum, whom she met every day in the building.

Ida looked up at her clock and had to hurry; it was getting very late. She changed her dress and ran downstairs, through the garden, locking the gate behind her. In the laundry three of the maids were singing. As Ida came out into the great courtyard, Dr. Qvam was

sitting on the stone steps sunning his white trousers.

"Eh, where are you off to in such a hurry?"

"I'm going for a walk."

Without getting up Dr. Qvam handed her a rose.

"Take that with you into the sunshine," he said, and Ida fastened it in her cloak.

Dr. Qvam sat following her with his eyes. She knows how to use her legs, he thought, as the gate to the street was opened for Ida and she stepped out into the sunshine.

Tram-car bells rang, and in the Botanical Garden huge clumps of maize swayed and nodded. Over her head, at all the open windows, the maids were beating dust out into the fresh air, as Ida walked along. How they went at it; and there were two of them talking across the street. It seemed to Ida that she saw everything, faces and people and every single tree, so clearly and brightly on a morning like this—as though she had been given new eyes.

At the corner of the lake the flower woman stood on her step and nodded.

"Thank you," said Ida, nodding back, bending forward slightly and pointing to Qvam's rose; "I have one today."

As a rule she would buy a flower, for they had such a fresh scent early in the morning, when the gardener had just brought them.

"Ah, yes," replied the flower woman. "But we're lucky with the weather, aren't we?"

"Yes," said Ida, looking out over the smooth lake, where the white boats lay at their landing-stages as still as if they were not yet awake. "It's a good year for flowers, Mrs. Hansen."

"Yes, even for roses, miss," said the woman, who was rather deaf and who had something of a deaf person's

look of surprise, as though, when she did hear anything, it must be an important secret; "even the roses, we're getting outdoor blooms now."

"Good-morning."

Ida turned into the Lake Road, as usual; she always kept to the same side of the Lakes. She preferred the roads she was accustomed to; then everything was familiar, every turning, every boat, the windows, and most of the people she met. And there were some who bowed to her, just as they did at home, in Horsens.

Now he gave her a nod too, the toothless old waiter at the "Rörholm." That was because they took coffee there the other morning, when Karl von Eichbaum had been late in getting up and had left home without his. They were the first customers and they sat behind a trellis-work hedge of ivy, which had just been watered, and ate rolls with their coffee: "It's just as if we were out in the country," said Ida. "Yes," said Karl von Eichbaum; "it's pleasant here."

They had not sat at table together since Ludvigsbakke days.

But getting up in the morning had always been his difficulty. At home at Ludvigsbakke he had always tried to get the room over the big loft, because Schröder would not be bothered to run up there and turn him out. And so he lay till past noon, smoking the Steward's pipes.

Ida was walking past the café, when a voice called to her. It was Karl von Eichbaum who appeared from behind the ivy.

"Morning," he cried.

Ida turned briskly:

"Good-morning," she said.

"I'm taking my coffee here."

"Again?" said Ida, who had stopped on the footpath.

Eichbaum came lounging out on to the road with both hands in his pockets.

"What weather," he said, pausing and looking at the water.

"We ought to go out to the Forest, Miss Ida," he said after a moment, still with his hands in his pockets.

"Yes, one ought."

They walked a little way side by side, he keeping to the road.

"But for that matter they haven't any forests in Zealand," he said.

"No, have they?" said Ida with a sudden smile.

"Over there you can see *trees*," continued Eichbaum, still thinking of Jutland.

They had stopped again, and a couple of young clerks came past.

Karl laughed: "The men turn round to look at you, Miss Ida."

"Why?"

Eichbaum laughed again: "Ah, why!" he said, smiling; "because you know how to stand on your feet. Good-morning."

Ida nodded and he slouched back, but stopped again in the middle of the road.

Ida walked on. She was thinking of the forests. She too had always thought they were quite different, the forests at home in Jutland.

A little farther on Miss Kaas and Miss Boserup came towards her. They too were out for a walk, but were already on the way home.

"You're out late," cried Miss Kaas.

"Yes," replied Ida. They stopped and chatted for a few moments; Ida's voice was so bright:

"But I must be getting on," she said. "Touch!" she clapped Miss Boserup on the shoulder and ran.

Miss Boserup gave her shoulder a shake.

"How old are you, Brandt?" she cried after her.

But Ida stopped and looked back, laughing:

"I'd have loved to have a swim."

Miss Kaas and Miss Boserup walked on, and Miss Kaas said:

"That hat suits Brandt."

But Miss Boserup planted her heel with decision and said:

"That's easy enough, if one has the money."

They discussed Ida's fortune, and Miss Boserup said:

"Yes, it's all very well—but the fact is, she's only keeping somebody else, who's only a probationer, out of the place."

Ida had reached the end of the Lakes and the lively breeze met her as she turned. She crossed the street to a flower shop and bought a plant in a pot for Miss Helgesen. She wanted so much to buy something—everything.

When she reached the hospital and came in to Miss Helgesen with the plant, she found her sitting in the middle of a huge piece of embroidery. Miss Helgesen was always at work on an endless piece of embroidery, with a regular and almost geometrical pattern.

"But isn't it pretty?" she said with a smile.

lately."

"Yes," said Ida, "it must be because it's such lovely weather."

She stood for a moment with one of the leaves of the plant between her fingers.

"But it's ridiculous, what a lot you're spending

She went upstairs to the first floor. Miss Petersen sat knitting under the big window, where the sun shone on all the flowers. The four were at work in the basement,

and within the ward lay the two old men, still and white, side by side in their beds.

"How cosy it is here," said Ida.

"Yes," said Miss Petersen; "it's quiet this morning."

They heard no sound but the footsteps of the Doctor in "A" walking to and fro, to and fro, everlastingly.

"Well, good-night," said Ida.

"Good-night."

Ida went up. She drew the green curtains before the window and shut the light out. But she could not sleep. Her head was so light and bright.

She lay thinking what clothes she should buy for the winter. A light fawn dress, she had thought.— They were always so smart for Miss Helgesen's birthday, in the evening. She could wear it then for the first time—

She shook her head—thinking of Karl von Eichbaum, how he had hunched up his shoulders in his thin summer overcoat the other morning, when it blew: "Ugh," he had said; "now we shall have to see about winter clothes."

Hm, he probably hadn't any money.

No—and Ida smiled; of course he hadn't.

Ida heard steps on the stairs and the door below being opened and shut. It was the patients coming up from the basement; so it was twelve o'clock.—

No, he had never been able to keep money—

Ida fell asleep.

It was the same day, at the "family mansion" in Custom House Road.

Mrs. von Eichbaum, her hands protected by gloves with the fingers cut off, had finished doing the lamps, and Julius, in cloth boots, crept in and put them back in their places. The lamps were Mrs. von Eichbaum's

only domestic occupation—as with her sister, the widow of General Gersdorff. It ran in the family: they dealt with the lamps themselves, as though they were their own flesh and blood.

"Julius, you will lay lunch for two," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, passing into the drawing-room. She expected her sister to come in from their country house. Mrs. Gersdorff always stayed in the country till far on in November. The autumn air did her good, as both she and her sister suffered from dryness of the skin.

"And besides," as she said to her sister, "one can be there oneself to see all the fruit brought in."

On the stroke of twelve the bell rang and Julius opened the door.

"Heavens, Emilie"—it was Mrs. Gersdorff entering the morning room; "what wonderful weather!—Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Charlotte, how nice to get you by yourself.—Julius, you can take in the urn."

Mrs. Gersdorff settled herself on the sofa, while Mrs. von Eichbaum went in to see to the table, and the sisters conversed from room to room. Mrs. Gersdorff talked of the country house: "You can't think how fresh and that it is in the morning— And the grapes, my dear, as big as *that*." She showed with her fingers how big the grapes were. And she had really thought of trying Mrs. Admiral Schleppegrell's receipt: "With powdered sugar, you know."

And then she could let her have half.

"Yes," said Mrs. von Eichbaum from the urn; "they really make a very nice little dessert."

The sisters went on talking. Their voices were exactly alike, with very careful pronunciation; Mrs. Gersdorff spoke a little more rapidly.

"But, Emilie"—Mrs. Gersdorff raised her voice

slightly at "Emilie" and let her hands drop into her lap—"what *do* you think of Aline?"

"Heavens," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, coming into the doorway and pausing there a moment with closed eyes; "at present I can scarcely bear so much as to speak of it. It's incredible that such a thing could have happened."

Mrs. Gersdorff repeated "incredible" and said:

"And we who all knew her in our family."

"We can begin, Charlotte," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

They sat down, still talking of Mrs. Feddersen. This was a friend of their childhood, Mrs. von Eichbaum's best friend, married to a country gentleman, Feddersen of Korsgaard, who suddenly, without warning, had left husband and children with a surveyor, who had grown-up sons of his own.

"And Feddersen," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "that quiet and worthy man."

Mrs. von Eichbaum handed her sister a dish and said slowly:

"But, Charlotte, it must be a momentary aberration.

"Thank you, Julius"—turning to the butler, who had opened the door—"we don't want anything."

Mrs. von Eichbaum went on eating, while her voice assumed a certain tone of explanation or pondering:

"You know, that family has always been curiously given to loquacity—they must always be talking."

"They have that from their Grundtvigian mother," put in Mrs. Gersdorff.

"Yes," Mrs. von Eichbaum nodded; "feelings and all that—and then they talk themselves into a state of morbid excitement. Aline was already given to that as a girl."

Mrs. Gersdorff agreed, and Mrs. von Eichbaum stood up and poured out the coffee.

"Dear me," she said, "why can't people learn to keep their mouths shut and bear it quietly and get over it."

Mrs. Gersdorff took her cup and nodded again.

"If one were to talk about everything," Mrs. von Eichbaum went on; "there'd be no end to it—one knows that in every family."

"Quite so," said Mrs. Gersdorff.

"And we all have our own troubles to bear," Mrs. von Eichbaum concluded with a wistful look.

They were silent for a while. Then Mrs. von Eichbaum said in a voice which showed a touch of emotion:

"But of course we shall stand by her—and say the same thing."

"Dear me, yes, Mille"—when they were alone the sisters sometimes called each other by pet names—"that's only natural. I told Anna Schleppegrell yesterday that Aline had gone to Vichy for swellings in her legs—"

They dropped the subject of Mrs. Feddersen, and Mrs. Gersdorff asked:

"Karl doesn't lunch at home?"

Until now they had not mentioned his name.

"Oh no, my dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "it's too far. He takes his lunch at the office. Ane cuts him sandwiches and he takes them with him. You know, these oilskin wallets they make now—it looks as if he were going to a Government office."

And in the same tone as when she spoke of Aline Feddersen's "aberration" Mrs. von Eichbaum added:

"*He* takes his walks in the morning, along the Lakes —I don't even hear him."

Whereupon Mrs. Gersdorff said:

"Yes, the mornings this year are glorious."

There was a faint knock at the door. It was Ane in a white apron, who came to pay her respects to Mrs. Gers-

dorff. Ane was a little round thing of fifty with straight-combed hair and gleaming false teeth.

She was so anxious to hear about Mrs. Gersdorff and the country house.

"Thank you, Ane," said Mrs. Gersdorff, as they rose from the table; "we have had some little trouble with the flues."

Ane nodded:

"Yes," she said; "but very often it's because they don't know how to roast."

There was always jealousy among the servants of the family.

"And keep too big a fire," said Ane, whose pronunciation was based on her mistress's.

Mrs. Gersdorff interrupted her rather shortly:

"And now I hear that Ane's Julie is going to be married?"

"Yes," said Ane, "the banns have been asked twice, and he wants to have it soon—"

"I'm told he is quite a decent, sober man," said Mrs. Gersdorff. "Well, good-morning, Ane."

The sisters went into the drawing-room, and Mrs. Gersdorff said she supposed they would have to think about a wedding present.

Ane's Julie was an illegitimate fruit of Ane's thirtieth year, when a young, beardless Adonis of a footman had played havoc among the maids. When the business at the lying-in hospital was over, Ane had returned to her place, and when Julie grew big enough she was sent to a charity school and came every other Sunday, when Mrs. von Eichbaum dined in Mrs. Gersdorff's apartment, to visit Ane, whom of course she called "Aunt."

Yes, Mrs. von Eichbaum had thought of a sugar-bowl and a cream-jug for a wedding present.

"He was here the other day," she said; "really quite a decent person—of that class, of course—and sat *there* —quite nicely on a chair. You see, they do get a sort of education at the Dockyard—"

"He" was Julie's fiancé, an excellent young man who was an engine-room artificer in the Fleet.

Mrs. Gersdorff, who was examining her sister's work —a bed-curtain with net-work insertions, the finished part of which was wrapped in much clean tissue paper —said, as she thought of Julie's unlawful origin:

"Well, *I* consider it *immensely* honourable of him."

As though they had read each other's thoughts, and as though time might be supposed to have mitigated the illegitimacy, Mrs. von Eichbaum said:

"He comes from Ringköbing, you know."

The mention of this provincial town called forth an association of ideas in Mrs. Gersdorff, who suddenly exclaimed:

"Do you know, I've had a letter from Vilhelmine. She writes that they are going to spend the winter here."

"All of them?" asked Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"No, Mourier will stay at home; only Mine and Kate. But they think of taking a flat—dear me, they can well afford it."

Mrs. Vilhelmine Mourier was one of the circle, married to a business man at Aarhus, who had made a large fortune by exporting butter to England.

"And Kate," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "is now about twenty."

Mrs. von Eichbaum, who had not seen Miss Kate Mourier for two or three years, asked:

"How has she turned out?"

"Quite a pretty blonde—a trifle forward, you know, as they are so apt to get in the provinces, where they have it all their own way—"

"My dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "that will pass off—with a mother like Vilhelmine."

"A good figure," said Mrs. Gersdorff, still thinking of Kate Mourier's exterior.

Mrs. von Eichbaum thought that anyhow she would write to Mine Mourier and say how pleasant it would be that they would see each other the whole winter.

"I believe they're going to make a tour of Jutland first," Mrs. Gersdorff went on; "Mourier wants to look at houses for the summer.—That's quite natural, as Vilhelmine has been used to the country from a child."

Mrs. von Eichbaum made no reply, but a new association of ideas prompted her to say:

"Do you know, little Brandt—the Steward's daughter, you remember—is now a nurse at the Hospital."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Gersdorff; "is *that* where she's gone?"

And she added, indifferently:

"Does she have to do it, I wonder?"

"Heavens, Lotte, why, she came into at least eighty thousand," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum. On mentioning the sum she seemed suddenly preoccupied, and added after a brief pause, reflectively: "Her father was an excellent man."

Mrs. Gersdorff prepared to take her departure and sent her love to Karl; but when she had put her things on in the hall she said:

"By the way, Emilie, you might lend me Petri's Sermons. The road to the chapel is in a terrible state, and there's nobody left there that one knows."

Mrs. von Eichbaum fetched the Sermons, and her sister said:

"Thanks—yes, one misses Petri so much in the summer. The others don't give one the same clear reasoning."

Mrs. Eichbaum nodded:

"My dear," she said; "it's his serenity, which he inherits from his father."

As she opened the door of the apartment, a young person in livery came up the stairs.

"Is it for me?" asked Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"Yes, it's an account for madam."

Mrs. Eichbaum took it, while the corners of her mouth trembled almost imperceptibly and Mrs. Gersdorff hurriedly glanced at her sister in the mirror.

"Oh," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, on opening the envelope. "It's from Cohn. I've had my grey silk cleaned. With an edging of black in front it will still do quite well.—Good-bye, Charlotte."

"Good-bye, Emilie. Well, we shall meet on Sunday. I'm borrowing Julius, you know."

Julius was passed round for the family dinner-parties.

"Good-bye."

Mrs. Gersdorff was on the stairs, and Mrs. von Eichbaum went to her writing-table in the drawing-room, while the messenger waited in the hall.

Mrs. von Eichbaum's money was kept in a drawer of the writing-table in separate envelopes, each for its appointed purpose. She took out fifteen crowns and the messenger went away. Mrs. von Eichbaum sat down again at the writing-table and made up her accounts.

After buying an annuity three years ago with what money Karl had left her, she had to look very closely at all her expenditure.

But still her *home* was not touched.

Mrs. von Eichbaum reflected, still sitting at her writing-table: It was a good thing that it was Cohn's account—and that Charlotte saw what it was.

But Karl was really settling down now—one must hope—at his office.

Mrs. von Eichbaum got up and went back to her bed-curtain. She had a different expression, older and more careworn, when she sat at her work, alone.

Julius entered the dining-room with a tray of knives and put them away.

At half-past four Julius came in to light the stove, and Mrs. von Eichbaum asked:

"Have you lighted Mr. Karl's?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Thank you."

Mrs. von Eichbaum herself rarely went into her son's room. It could only be entered from the staircase. Four years ago, when Karl came back from Switzerland and while she herself was at Aix, she had had the door between Karl's room and the morning-room bricked up.

When any of his friends came to see him, they used to smoke in there.

And Mrs. von Eichbaum had explained to Mr. Petersen, the family's builder: "If one has it bricked up, one will be spared all that smoke on one's good furniture."

Mr. Petersen had bricked it up, and when Karl von Eichbaum came home, he could only get to his room from the staircase.—

Mrs. von Eichbaum heard Karl in the morning-room and nodded "Good-day" to him in the doorway.

"Aunt Charlotte has been here," she said. "It seems to be lovely in the country. She sent her love."

Her voice sounded scarcely so broad when she spoke to her son; the words seemed to be pinched in her mouth.

"Thanks," said Karl, taking a chair by the writing-table. He never stood for long at a time. Presently he asked:

"When do they come back to town?"

Mrs. von Eichbaum talked of her sister's plans, when Julius opened the dining-room door and quietly announced: "Dinner is served," and they went in. The bottle of red wine, which had no label, stood by Karl's place.

"Shall I pour you out some, Mother?" said Karl, leaning forward.

"Thank you, enough to colour it."

There were days when Karl dined out, and then Mrs. von Eichbaum drank nothing but water.

She helped him to soup, still talking of the country house and the lovely mornings.

"Yes," said Karl, with a slight change of tone, as he paused for a moment with the wine glass in his hand: "it *is* jolly in the morning."

And they ate in silence, till Mrs. von Eichbaum found a topic in the Mouriers—it was the way with her, that either she or the other always had to *find* a topic.

"They're coming to town this winter, your Aunt Charlotte says—you know, the Mouriers from Aarhus."

"Oh," said Karl, "the butterman—"

"My dear Karl"—Mrs. von Eichbaum let her spoon rest for an instant in her soup—"trade is nowadays immensely respectable."

"Yes," murmured Karl, "they make money, don't they?"

He bore a lazily surprised grudge against people who went about making money.

"And Vilhelmine, who came from Unsgaard, such a good family—"

Mrs. von Eichbaum went on with her soup: "But first they are going round Jutland to look at country houses."

They were silent again, till Karl said carelessly, for the sake of saying something, while Julius handed him the next dish:

"They might buy Ludvigsbakke."

The Councillor's heirs were still saddled with the estate, for which they could not get a fair price owing to the general depression.

"It would be too big for them," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"But they have the money," said Karl; "and it would be an investment."

Karl was suddenly keen on the idea; he poured himself out another glass and went on talking about the "Bakke."

"They won't find a more taking property," he said; and he thought of the broad drive through the fields and the big poplars as you approached the house and the lawns, where the sun used to get in his eyes, and the stable, with the two mares in their loose boxes.

"No, there isn't a more taking property," he repeated. "And everything well kept up, buildings and all."

"Yes, the house makes a handsome impression," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Karl thought of the great white house with its steps and the drive past the Steward's wing, and all at once he laughed:

"And now the Recks ought to be ready to leave," he said; "now that Mrs. Reck has got Constance married."

"Karl," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, and checked herself; "I'm sure Mrs. Reck is not that sort of mother—"

But Karl went on talking of the "Bakke," as he cracked walnuts and peeled apples, and his mother grew animated, with a trace of colour in her cheeks. It always

made her so happy when they stayed sitting after a meal.

"And there's splendid shooting," said Karl, as they rose from the table.

"Good digestion, my boy," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, keeping his hand in hers for a moment.

Karl was talkative and in a good humour this evening; as they entered the drawing-room he said:

"Will Mother let me have my coffee in here?"

Mrs. von Eichbaum made haste to reopen the dining-room door.

"Julius, Mr. Karl will take coffee in here," she said in a clear voice.

"You'll smoke, won't you?" she said.

And as they sat down, at each end of the corner sofa, and Karl lighted his cigarette, she told him:

"But I hear Schröder's in a bad way—it must be dropsy."

Karl smoked thoughtfully and then said:

"You might ask Ida Brandt here some time, Mother. She doesn't know anybody, of course."

"I really think I could," said Mrs. von Eichbaum with increased animation; "when there's a suitable opportunity. She's quite presentable."

Karl watched the smoke of his cigarette:

"She's sweet," he said.

And a moment later:

"She's real sweet."

Julius brought in the coffee, and Karl watched him until he had gone out again.

"Couldn't you tell Julius to wear proper shoes, Mother?"

Those cloth boots of Julius's were a constant irritation to him; one could never hear the man coming.

"Really, Karl," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, pouring out; "I think it's such a blessing not to hear a person who is waiting on one."

The fact was that Julius suffered from sore feet, which latterly had prevented his taking a better place. "My dear Emilie," Mrs. Gersdorff used to say to her sister; "but for that we should never keep that capable person."

Karl's cigarette went out, and he sat with a half smile, looking at his own face in the sideboard mirror.

Hm, how well he knew that sideboard. Ever since his childhood it had stood *there*, with the same Dresden dishes, in the same place.

And he said, smiling:

"Mother's things last well."

"It's only a question of taking care of them," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Karl made no reply; but, with a sudden intuition of all the affection implied by this home, which, in spite of him and in spite of everything, had *remained the same*, he reached for his mother's hand and pressed it slightly.

Then he got up.

"I shall stay at home this evening," he said; "I can read something."

When he was gone Mrs. von Eichbaum got up and closed the door of the morning-room, as she was in the habit of doing when Karl was at home. Her hands shook slightly as she bolted it. It was a curious thing about Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was usually so calm, that her hands trembled a little when she was happy. But that was the only sign that she was growing older.

Karl went into his own room and lighted the lamp, before changing to an old jacket behind the curtain which concealed his bed. It was a big French bed. Mrs.

von Eichbaum had bought it when it was settled that Karl was coming home.

"Because, you know," she said to her sister, "people who have lived in France—"

"My dear," replied Mrs. Gersdorff, "it's only natural. How can anyone get on without proper sleep at night?"

The bed was bought.—

Karl seated himself in the easy chair with the leg-rest and took up one of the French novels. His room had no very inhabited look except in the morning, before it was put straight; then it was untidy enough, with his rifles, a few horsy pictures and a couple of old Eichbaum swords on the walls, and the yellow books on the table, which Ane arranged every day in two piles of equal height.

Karl did not get much reading done. He sat and smoked a pipe, still thinking of the estate.

Now of course these Mouriers could buy the "Bakke," after fleecing the Brahes and the Vedels of their butter for twenty years—

Karl twitched his nose, as he always did when he felt either repugnance or surprise.

"It's incredible," he said.

That was his pet expression. That anybody ever got anything done seemed to Karl von Eichbaum so extraordinary that a great part of the events and phenomena of life must necessarily appear to him "incredible."

"But let them go ahead," he said.

His thoughts were still on the "Bakke."

If he had gone in for agriculture instead of being ploughed in all his exams, he might perhaps have taken over the farm—under the butterman.

Karl thrust out his lips.

Hm, the last summer they spent at the "Bakke" was the year Ida's mother died.

There was a knock at the door, and Julius entered with a bottle on a tray.

"The mistress told me to bring in the Madeira," he said.

Karl nodded and poured himself out a glass: the Madeira was good. It came from the right place.

Mrs. von Eichbaum's Madeira was brought home by the naval officers of the family.

"Damn it all, it's a hoggish life trailing round to all these pubs," said Karl.

With the glass at his side he began to read again. But soon he laid the yellow volume on his knee and smiled. He was thinking that after all it would be fun to take Ida Brandt to one of these places, because of course she had never seen a thing.—

Mrs. von Eichbaum sat at her writing-table. She might just as well write to Vilhelmine at once, the days were full of other things and she would never get it done. And today it so happened that she had thought so much of her and of old times at Unsgaard.

"Dear Vilhelmine," she wrote; "how lovely it is to think we shall be seeing each other again, and not just for a week or two at an hotel, which is only upsetting. But to have you here in peace and quietness. I hope you will find something in this neighbourhood. I have thought of the Lindholms' flat; they are going to Nice on Mary's account—they always take consumptives away when it is too late. Perhaps you could take that, if we had it well aired and cleaned. You know, it's close by here, and it would suit Kate to be so near the Ride and Langelinje. And you must think about your health too. I am looking forward very much to the winter, and

to seeing Kate; it is so refreshing to have a few young people in one's circle—"

Mrs. von Eichbaum finished her letter and sat staring at the candles. She was thinking of Karl:

Now one could see, it only required regular occupation and fixed hours, such as he had at the office, and then he'd settle down. But no doubt she had always been to blame—she should never have sent him away from home.

With a pliant nature like his.

Mrs. von Eichbaum heard Julius in the dining-room. She thought it was a long time since she had looked forward so much to a cup of tea.

On Sunday it was warm enough for Mrs. Gersdorff and Mrs. von Eichbaum to take their coffee on the veranda. Mrs. Gersdorff said: "Only you must put a shawl over your shoulders, Mille, as you're accustomed to town air."

Julius brought the shawl, and the sisters sat and looked over the Sound.

"You need not bring any coffee for Mr. Karl," said Mrs. Gersdorff. Karl von Eichbaum had gone down to the Bellevue Hotel to play billiards.

Mrs. von Eichbaum talked of Vilhelmine Mourier.

"So I wrote to her," she said; "and I wonder whether they couldn't take the Lindholms' flat."

"Heavens, Emilie," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "do you really think so—in that consumptive house?"

"My dear," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum, "*where* could one find a place to live, if one is going to be so apprehensive? I who am used to travelling, I ask you, how is one to be sure of escaping infection? Of course, they won't use the same bedclothes, and if we take

care beforehand to have the place well aired—"

"Yes," said Mrs. Gersdorff.

"And it would be such a comfort to have them close by, so that we could go in and out."

Mrs. von Eichbaum paused and looked out over the water.

"And delightful for Kate, as she is so fond of riding."

Mrs. Gersdorff nodded:

"She rides superbly," she said.

And presently she added, looking over the water:

"Exactly Vilhelmine's figure when she was young."

The sisters went on talking of other things.

That Sunday was the last warm day of the year.

Monday brought mud and slush, and Ida struggled on her last morning walk—today her night duty had come to an end—against the wind by the Lakes.

As she was on her way home she met Karl von Eichbaum, who had just stepped off a tram-car.

He came strolling across to her with both hands in his pockets and the oil-cloth wallet held tightly under his right arm.

"Ugh," he began in a discontented tone, but suddenly smiled; "our spring weather didn't come off."

"No, we shan't get out to the Forest."

"But," said Karl, thrusting his hands deep in his pockets to mark his decision, "we'll go out on the spree all the same."

Ida laughed: "How?" she asked.

"We'll go somewhere to supper one evening. We can take one of the others with us."

"That would make it worse," said Ida hurriedly.

And added, turning crimson: "With a stranger."

"Well, all right," said Karl, and all at once his voice

changed and seemed so good: "Then we'll go by ourselves."

They entered the gate of the Hospital and stood chatting for a moment.

Then Karl, with his foot on the steps leading to the office, still with his hands in his pockets, asked her in the same "good" voice as before:

"How old are you, Miss Ida?"

"You know that without asking."

But Karl said: "No, strike me dead if you're more than seventeen."

Ida merely laughed—that was the youngest thing about her, the short little, half-suppressed laugh—and they separated.

Ida went up to her room. When she had got into bed the sun came out behind the dark green curtains and flooded the room with a calm, subdued light, like the faint gleam of a green-shaded lamp. Ida lay with half-closed eyes.

All at once it struck her that Karl Eichbaum had on a summer overcoat today again.—

Two days later, when Ida had to take an admittance order down to the office, she met Karl von Eichbaum coming through the gate in a fine new overcoat. He had been out to lunch. When Karl von Eichbaum had cash at his command he handed Ane's domestic provisions to one of the porters and stood himself a lunch at "Svendsen's."

They exchanged a few words and Ida stood looking at him.

"Yes," said Karl, throwing out his chest; "we're quite a swell."

"A frightful swell," she said, dropping into a Jutland accent all at once; it made her so happy to see him so well turned out.

But Karl said:

"You ought to spit on it, Miss Ida."

"Yes," said Ida; "that's what we girls always did at home in Horsens."

They were still laughing at this when a lady came in at the gate.

"Good morning, Mother," said Karl, moving a step or two away from Ida.

"This is Miss Brandt," he then said.

Mrs. von Eichbaum put out her hand.

"It's nice to see you, Ida. I heard from Karl that you had taken a situation here."

"Yes," said Ida, turning very red, and hastened to add:

"I have to deliver an admittance order—"

"But," Mrs. von Eichbaum went on, "you must come and see me some day—now that" (with a slight smile) "you are under the same roof as my son. He can always let me know when you have a day off."

Mother and son stood in the gateway, while Mrs. von Eichbaum gave Karl a message. She preferred to bring it herself rather than send Julius; as she said to her sister: "One ought not to send Julius or anyone like that to an office, where the others, you know, are perhaps in humbler circumstances."

As Karl saw his mother back to the street, she said:

"I really think it's nice for you to have little Brandt here—you can always exchange a word or two. Goodbye, Karl."

As Karl went up the steps, Ida came out of the office door:

"Well, have you thought it over, Miss Ida?" he said.

"Thought what over?"

"Our going out to supper," replied Karl. "Because,

hang it all"—he slapped his new overcoat—"this has got to be christened, you know."

Ida blew out the candles on her dressing-table and tried to find the door in the dark. She did not realize how cautiously she stole about on tiptoe. But she did not want to meet anyone now—just at this moment, when it was time to go.

She ran on, down the stairs, and suddenly gave a start: someone opened and shut the door of the "violent corridor."

"Ugh," said Qvam, as he came out; "one never gets any peace."

"Well, I've got the evening off," said Ida, running away from him.

She went across the yard, nodding to everyone, to two of the porters, who were standing at one of the doorways, and to the porter at the gate and Josefine, who came out on to the steps.

"Well, miss," said Josefine, taking in her new cloak; "so you're going out to see some life." And she nodded, like the rest.

"Yes," said Ida with a smile.

She passed out into the street. There he was already, by the lamp-post at the corner of the Botanical Garden.

"Here I am," she said, raising her face. She was almost out of breath.

"Yes," said Karl, "there's lots of time. Good evening."

And they shook hands.

They walked on amid the ringing of tram-car bells and the trotting of cab horses.

"What did you say?" asked Karl in the slight drawl he affected when he was pleased with things; "where did you say you were going?"

"Oh, I said something—"

"Yes," remarked Karl; "one's never hard up for a lie. Strike me dead, we learn that in the nursery."

Ida's eyes grew suddenly serious: "Oh, yes."

But her mood changed again at once, and she said radiantly: "They all seemed to be wishing me a good time."

She was thinking of the way they had nodded to her as she came out.

And Karl, whose cigar was hanging at the extreme edge of his lips, remarked:

"Well, now we've jolly well got to think of what we're going to eat."

They both laughed.

They had now reached the gate of Örsted's Park.

"We can go through the gardens," said Ida, "if there's time."

"But they'll shut the gates soon," said Karl, as he followed her in.

They walked over the last dead leaves, but the beds were still gay with flowers.

"How pretty it is here," said Ida.

There seemed to be no one in the whole garden, not a soul on any of the paths, and as they walked side by side they heard nothing but their own footsteps.

"Now they're going to sleep," said Karl, pointing up at one of the calm statues.

They went up to a little terrace under a huge tree. Below them lay the slopes and the dark, smooth water.

Ida dropped her voice:

"This is the best place of all," she said.

Karl blew the smoke of his cigar into long rings and neither of them spoke. The sound of bells and the rumble of wheels seemed far away and the light of the street lamps hung over the railings like a gleaming wreath.

"Is it like this in the big cities?" asked Ida quietly. Her eyes were on the slopes and the bridge and the silent water.

"Yes," said Karl, and the rings of smoke were broken up.

"Not any grander?"

"No," he said.

A swan shot noiselessly over the dark water.

"That's what I've always thought," said Ida.

They stood there for a moment longer.

"But it's getting late," said Ida in quite a different voice, and they turned to go.

"Well, good-night, old man!" Karl nodded up at Örsted's statue as they passed, and they laughed again.

Ida was always a step in front of Karl as they went along the street.

"There's lots of time," said Karl, who was fond of the dusk in the streets.

"Yes, but then we can see the people come in," said Ida, still hurrying.

But when they reached the theatre and came into the balcony, there was not a soul in the stalls.

"There," said Karl, "weren't we in time?"

Soon after people began to arrive, and they heard the gay clatter of seats and the noise of boxes being unlocked and all the cheerful hum of the corridors.

Ida thrust up her shoulders with pleasure and gave a little shake of her arms:

"Oh," she said, "this is the first night of the piece."

"Yes," said Karl, "that's what makes it amusing."

Men in white shirt fronts stood up in the stalls and ladies with elaborately dressed hair squeezed hurriedly between the rows. Karl mentioned their names, critics and authors and people Ida knew from the papers.

Ida chattered with delight and followed every name

he mentioned. But suddenly she half rose and looked up at the circle above them, with a little cast of the head:

"That's where we generally sit," she said, and sat down again quickly.

"Who?"

"We," she said.

Some of the nurses had had a subscription the year before.

Ida watched the house again, while the noise increased, smiling and leaning right back in her seat. But all at once she said in alarm, turning crimson:

"Oh, supposing Mrs. von Eichbaum were here!"

"She's not," said Karl; "she never goes to any but the Royal Theatre unless she gets a fire brigade ticket, and she hasn't got one this evening."

They turned their eyes again upon the people who kept coming in. Ida caught at Karl's arm:

"Look, there's Mrs. Lind. She has been a patient of ours."

That was the only one she knew.

The footlights went up and shed their gleam over the curtain. In the stalls every head was in motion and the balcony was a row of bright, nodding faces.

Ida was still smiling:

"It feels just as if one was at a ball," she said, almost in a whisper.

Karl sat with outstretched legs biting his moustache, and looking as if it tasted good.

The orchestra had been playing a little while.

"What is it they're playing?" asked Karl trying to see the program. But Ida did not answer; she sat with half-closed eyes listening to the music. Karl glanced round at her forehead. It was so small and narrow; one felt inclined to span it with one's fingers, from temple to temple.

Ida felt his eyes on her and looked up.

"It's lovely here," she said. "Isn't it?"

The curtain went up.—

People were crowding and pushing in the narrow rooms of the restaurant. Karl von Eichbaum walked behind Ida Brandt, protecting her as well as he could with his elbows, but Ida laughed all over her face as she turned to him:

"We must sit where we can see people," she said with beaming eyes.

"There's a table reserved," said Karl.

It was in one of the little boxes between partitions, and at last they reached it. Ida sat down on the sofa, keeping her hat and cloak on; she was looking at all the men and women who continued to pour in.

"Ah, we've got our table," she said, tossing her shoulders as she had done in the theatre.

Karl took off her cloak and sat down.

"There," he said, stretching out his legs and twitching his nose; "now we're going to feed *à la française*."

"Yes," said Ida jerking her head back. She probably had no idea what she was saying "yes" to.

Karl gave his order and the waiter brought the dishes and Karl helped them. Ida simply watched all that they did and smiled; and she fingered everything with such an odd circumspection, her glass, her plate, her bread, as though wondering at it all, the cloth and the candles and the green bottle in the wine-cooler.

Then she said with a quiet laugh, spreading out her hands on the sofa:

"To think that I'm sitting here."

Karl gave her a happy smile and looked at the people in the big room, who could hardly squeeze in at the tables.

"My word, yes, we're best off."

Ida had not moved: "Hm," she said in the same tone; "it's just like a picnic."

Karl, who was eating slowly and hugely, laughed and said:

"I don't agree with you. One always feeds so damnably at a picnic."

But Ida was still thinking of picnics, the outings they had had in Jutland, when they drove to Stensballe, a whole waggonette load, and danced in front of the wheelwright's house and ran races down the high banks.

"Oh yes," she said; "it feels just like old times."

But Karl, whose appetite was nearly satisfied, said that she must really have something to eat and put a quail on her plate.

"The food's uncommon good," he said; and with his mind on the picnics he put his elbows on the table and said (thinking, strike me dead, she's charming):

"I expect you went pretty often—for picnics?"

Ida paused, looking absently before her:

"No, not so very often," she said in a lower voice.

Karl was still looking at her:

"Then we two Jutes will drink together."—He raised his glass merrily.

Ida laughed and held up hers:

"But you're not a Jute at all, really."

Karl twitched his nose:

"Of course I am, all we Eichbaums are Jutes. It's *there* that we used to own something."

And they drank.

Karl kept on helping her, still with his elbows on the table, and twice he leaned over and dipped his celery in her salt cellar.

"What lovely celery there was at Ludvigsbakke," said Ida.

"Yes."

He looked at her, still eating his celery, and said:

"Ida, you ought always to wear yellow."

"Why?"

"You ought," he said lazily.

Karl was still chewing his celery, and suddenly he thought of the Mouriers. He told her about them and said there was a chance of their buying the "Bakke." "He's a butter merchant from Aarhus," he said, with a contemptuous drawl on the first syllable of the Jutland "capital," and added in a tone of satisfaction:

"But then we could get rid of the Recks—"

"Why?"

"Well," explained Karl in his dry voice; "because they're a low lot."

"Yes," Ida assented involuntarily. She did not know why she felt so happy or that her face was beaming.

"And then we can go over there again in the summer," said Karl. "Here's luck, Ida."

"Good luck," said Ida, still with the same look on her face.

And Karl, putting down his glass and thrusting his hands into his pockets, said in a happy voice:

"All the same, it's not so bad in King's Copenhagen, what?"

They chatted more gaily and seemed to come nearer. Ida talked of Olivia and the villa and the Jörgensens—she always did so when she was happy—but all at once she said:

"Ugh, how he shouted—"

"Who?"

"The young man in the play," she said.

Karl laughed. "Well, but he had to make himself heard."

Ida's eyes had an absent look.

"But all the same," she said in a lower tone.

There was hardly anyone left in the restaurant and the waiters stood about, whispering over their bills.

Karl sat with a smile on his lips, looking at the neck of a bottle.

"Have you ever been in love, Ida?" he asked.

Ida looked up and shook her head, a little sadly.

"No," she said, as though this was something that had passed her by.

"But"—her voice quivered a little and she did not know why she said it or what she was really thinking of, unless it was the little house at Horsens and its three dingy rooms—"But," she said, with an attempt at a smile, "I have often felt sad."

A gleam of sympathy came into Karl's eyes.

"That's incredible, upon my soul," was all he said.

And they sat in silence for a while.

Ida looked out into the restaurant, which was half in darkness; most of the gas-jets had been turned out.

"But everybody's gone," she said in alarm.

"Yes," said Karl, spreading himself in his chair; "but we're going to have our coffee all the same."

They had it and liqueurs too, which Karl poured out. His voice and manner had become gentler, as they sat for a little while longer. But the waiters, who were getting impatient, turned out the last of the gas-jets and they were left with no light but that of the candles.

Ida looked into the advancing darkness:

"Now it's all over," she said.

"Next time it'll be your turn," said Karl.

"Yes," Ida hastened to say, cheerfully.

"It'll have to be at home," said Karl, helping her on with her cloak; "up in your room—"

"Oh no," said Ida, laughing.

"Why not?"

"Because it's against the rules."

Ida was still laughing, but Karl merely handed her her hat and said:

"Oh, blow the rules!"

They went out through the hotel entrance and the hall porter was closing the door behind them, when Ida said, beaming with joy:

"Let me—" and put a crown into his hand.

Karl laughed as if he had been paid for it:

"But strike me dead, Ida, do you think that's the thing to do?"

When they had gone a little way down the street he offered her his arm:

"One may give a lady one's arm, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes," said Ida, taking it, as she braced her shoulders; "it's dark now."—

Karl walked up and down his room, smiling, for a long time before he got into bed. The candle stood by his bedside and a yellow book lay there. But he did not read.

He simply lay staring up into the air, twitching his nose from time to time.

"No," he said, reflecting deeply or lost in wonder, "one doesn't know much about women after all."

And he smiled at the smoke of his cigarette.

The hospital was quiet and Ida stole gently up the stairs. When she reached the corridor on the first floor, Miss Roed was standing by the open cupboard.

"Good gracious, is that you, as late as this?" she said; "where have you been for a picnic?"

Ida smiled at the word "picnic": "I've been out," she said, trying to slip past—it was as though she were carrying some lovely invisible thing in her hands and must bring it to a place of safety—"good-night."

But Miss Petersen, who wore dainty cloth slippers at night, had heard her and opened her door ajar. Noth-

ing interested her so much as a detailed account from one who had had an evening out.

"Ach, is it you?" she said. Her voice had a peculiar fussy sound when she scented news.

Suddenly Ida twirled Miss Roed twice round in front of the cupboard: "I've been to the theatre," she said, so loudly that her voice rang through the passage, and ran off.

"Hush, the patients," said Miss Roed. But the two nurses only heard Ida's laugh overhead, and they went into the room where their dinner was waiting under the gas-jet.

As they were eating they heard the deep breathing of the two old men and a few broken words from Bertelsen, who talked in his sleep with a sort of angry rebelliousness. From Room "A" came the sound of footsteps pacing to and fro.

Miss Petersen went on with her meal, and in the Ward Bertelsen was still talking in his sleep. Miss Roed got up to see to him; but he only lay tossing with clenched fists, as usual.

Ida was up in her room. She set the alarm-clock and undressed. She really was thinking of nothing; she merely hummed all the time, until she was in bed.

Hm, yes, if Eichbaum could come to coffee—if he could steal up without being seen—

Ida's face shone with pleasure in the dark.

But it would have to be a Tuesday, when Miss Roed had her evening off—on a Tuesday he could quite well slip up here, very quietly.

Ida dwelt on the idea, smiling: then they would use all her old things from Ludvigsbakke and see whether he recognized them—a regular set table—

Ida fell asleep.—

It was dinner-time a couple of days later. The four

had come up from the basement and were wandering round and round in the ante-room waiting for their food (Bertelsen incessantly passed his hand over his eyes, as though trying to brush away something that hindered him from seeing), when there was a sound of keys and Josefine arrived with the dishes.

"Good-day, everybody," she said; "here we are with the grub."

She went into the kitchen to help Ida with her saucepans, while Bertelsen rinsed his hands again and again under the tap.

"It's a great shame about the chief clerk," said Josefine.

"What?" asked Ida hurriedly. Josefine always alluded to Eichbaum as the chief clerk.

"Why, the duns are after him all the time," said Josefine; "they're all talking about it in the porter's lodge."

"Here? At the office?" It sounded as if Ida had something in her throat.

"Yes," said Josefine, putting down her saucepan; "the Lord help him if the Secretary comes to hear of it—"

Ida nodded mechanically.

"But of course it's the women that hang on to him, we know all about that," said Josefine, as she served out potatoes on the six plates.

Ida did not reply; she went on serving out the food in silence, while Josefine, who was ready, stood with arms akimbo.

"And such a nice figure he's got," she said with an air of reflection.

Josefine always had a sympathetic eye for male shapeliness; apart from that she remained perfectly faithful to her conductor. *She* never left a "friend," and when

he left her and she had shed abundant tears, she nevertheless kept to the same occupation: it was always a tram-car conductor, but another one.

"Yes," she said, "one knows all about it—for Andersen has been behaving badly" (Andersen was the conductor of the moment)—"But now we've settled it all—"

It was these everlasting paternity cases that her different conductors got involved in, and Josefine found herself contributing to the allowances they had to pay.

It could not be seen whether Ida heard, as she was busy with the six plates.

"Now we'll trot along," said Josefine.

A snatch of forbidden song, some refrain from a revue, was always to be heard when Josefine got going.

Ida set a plate on the table before each of the four: "Now you must eat your dinner, Holm," she said. "There, Bertelsen, you must sit down and eat your dinner." She helped the two old men, a mouthful at a time; and soon she had finished and cleared away—with but one thought in her mind: "Poor fellow, poor fellow."

Comprehension never came swiftly to her brain, but only little by little, until it swelled to exaggeration and she could think of nothing else.

What was to be done, what was to be done?—What if he lost his place—what was to be done?—

She laid the table for the patient in "A." He sat bending over his everlasting papers, and she heard his "Thank you," as he raised his head and followed her movements with his eyes.

Ida went out again and sat down on the chair below the window:

And she had helped to spend his money.

Her thoughts got no farther than that: she had

helped to spend his money. All that Josefine had said about him rang in her ears again and again and suddenly she turned as red as blood. Something had struck her for the first time. She did not know that she was no longer thinking of his money, but only of this, only of this—*Who* had been spending his money?

The porter fetched the four to their work in the basement and the two old men dozed in their beds. The patient in "A" measured the floor with his steps. Now and again a shriek came from the "violent corridor."

Ida went backwards and forwards, attending to the old men and returning home to her chair, until it was dusk.

Miss Kjær put her boyish head in from the door of the Women's Ward:

"Good-evening, Maid."

And suddenly Ida said:

"Oh, Miss Kjær, could you take my place a minute—I must go up—"

"Yes," said Miss Kjær, shutting the door; "one minute."

Ida went out, downstairs, through the garden, across the courtyard, up to the office. Karl was sitting alone at his desk under the gas-jet, with his legs drawn up on the office stool and his chin in his hands, whistling.

On seeing her he raised his head and smiled at her:

"Good-evening."

She asked some question, she did not know what, and all at once she too smiled, while he went on talking and stretched himself with his arms in the air:

"God, what a dog's life it is," he said.

And Ida laughed.

She went back across the yard. There was no longer any anxiety in her and she smiled, thinking:

It's perfectly natural that I should help him.

And she thought of nothing else, now that she had seen him.

When Ida came up, Miss Kjær was waiting just inside the door:

"The Boss is here," she whispered.

Ida gave a terrified start.

"Where?" she whispered.

"In 'A.'"

There was the sound of a cautious key, and Miss Kjær was back in the Women's Ward. Ida went round and lighted the gas, while she heard the Professor's voice in Room "A," the door of which stood ajar. She began to get the ward ready for the visit, when she heard the porter coming upstairs with the four and the keys turning in the lock.

"The Senior Physician is here," she told the porter below her breath, and the four patients, who overheard it, went in bashfully and sat on the stools at the foot of each bed, while a voice in the Women's Ward suddenly began to wail.

Ida was standing by the stove when the door of "A" opened. The Professor paused in the doorway, erect and slight in his long black frock-coat.

"Well, go on as you're doing, Doctor," he said and shut the door. "Just let the patient do as he likes—and you can turn down the gas at night."

His voice was colourless and he scarcely opened his lips in speaking, as though he were trying to keep as close a guard as possible on his white teeth and all the secrets within.

"Very good, Professor."

He stood for a moment at the entrance to the Men's Ward, while Bertelsen's eyes flickered over his face.

"Nothing new," he said and passed on to the Women's

Ward. But one of the old men in bed was whimpering, as he always did when the wards were being visited.

Ida went and knocked at Miss Petersen's door to wake her. She did not hear Dr. Qvam come in.

"Where is the Senior Physician?" he asked hurriedly.

"He went into the Women's Ward," replied Ida, who was just going into the Men's.

Qvam was hurrying off, but paused for a second and looked at Ida.

"Is it your birthday again today?" he asked.

Ida laughed: "No-o, why?"

"Why, because your face seems to shine so," he said. He was already half-way to the Women's Ward. The wailing could be heard again through the open door.

"Miss Petersen, Miss Petersen!" cried Ida.

She turned round; Bertelsen was back at the tap washing his hands.

"Now then, Bertelsen," she said, taking him by both wrists and shaking them; "they're quite clean."

And as she gave his damp, red wrists another shake, she thought with a smile: Poor fellow, he wanted to hide his sorrow.

There was increasing disturbance in the Women's Ward. Scream followed scream, as though answering, and beat against the closed door.

Miss Petersen, who had left her bower, put her head out of the kitchen:

"Ach, how restless they are," she said. "But it's the change in the weather."

Miss Petersen's feet were like a barometer when the weather was changeable.

But after tea Ida ran across to the post office with a registered letter for Mr. Karl von Eichbaum.

It was the last day of Ida's day duty.

Miss Helgesen was making a tour of the Department; her eyes always looked as though she were entering things on an inventory.

"Will you take this admittance order across?" she said to Ida.

"Yes," replied Ida. All the blood had left her face.

"I'll stay here meanwhile," said Miss Helgesen, seating herself.

So Ida *had* to go—over to the office. Her keys seemed so slow in unlocking all the doors, and she did not see the head nurse, who nodded from her window. A sort of dread had fallen upon her as soon as she had sent the money yesterday. The moment she left the post office, where she had felt so happy as the clerk sealed her letter and gave her the receipt, this dread had come over her: suppose it made him angry, suppose it only made him angry. And at night she had not slept, while the thought grew and grew in her brain: that he would be angry. But no doubt she ought to have written, she ought to have put in some explanation. But she *could* not write; she simply couldn't do it—

And now perhaps he was angry.

She went across the yard and through the entrance and up the stairs. She saw his face as soon as she came to the door; his skin seemed so fair. But on seeing her he turned fiery red.

"It's an admittance order," she said.

He leaned over to her:

"Upon my soul, it's incredible," he said in a hushed voice which sounded rather thick. "Thanks."

Ida recovered her breath and was going, but when they were outside the door—for he followed her—she said (to help him out or to console him; a second before she would never have thought of saying it):

"Now we must have coffee on Tuesday."

A kind of twitch passed over Eichbaum's face. He said, thrusting out his lips:

"I'd rather have tea."

Ida laughed: "No," she said, in the same hurried voice; "it'll have to be coffee, because we're going to use the old coffee-pot—"

Then she ran off.

No, no, he was not angry.

Oh no, he had understood her—

Karl von Eichbaum went over to Svendsen's for lunch. He whistled as he went along the street; but all the same there was something—as though he could not really bring himself to think of that money or that he could now spread some of it round, to fill up the worst holes. And it gave him a sort of unpleasant feeling in his fingers if he only thought of the envelope that contained it.

But when it came to paying his bill, he hastily took out one of the many big notes to get it changed.

Jensen, the waiter, remained standing, with a slight bow, at sight of the envelope.

"Does Mr. von Eichbaum wish to pay the whole?" he asked, dropping his voice and leaning towards the sofa.

But Mr. von Eichbaum did not answer. As though shyly, he had taken out a card from among the bank-notes. It bore nothing but the name "Ida" in tiny Gothic characters—and then there was a little picture of Ludvigsbakke in the corner.

Karl von Eichbaum sat for some minutes with the card in his hand.

When the lunch hour was over, both Svendsen's right-hand men, Messrs. Jensen and Sörensen, took a rest, each leaning against his door-post.

"There you see, Sörensen" (Mr. Jensen talked in the

snuffing voice which he considered smart in his profession), "I got my money. Those kind of people always manage it somehow—that's what we used to find at the d'Angleterre—"

In palmier days Mr. Jensen had officiated in the à la carte restaurant of the Hôtel d'Angleterre.

"Yes, till the smash comes, Jensen," said Sörensen.

Mr. Jensen made no answer. He was picking his teeth.

IDA PRETENDED to be asleep, as she glanced through a crack of her eyelids from Miss Roed at the mirror to the alarm clock facing her bed. She gently slid her feet up and down under the bedclothes, unable to lie still.

But at last Miss Roed had her hat on, and Ida appeared to wake up:

"Are you going to your sister's?" she asked.

Yes, Miss Roed was going there—she always went to her sister, who was married to a railway clerk named Hansen. They were the only people she knew in town, and there was always plenty for her to do there, with their three children.

Ida had a vision of them, Miss Roed and Mrs. Hansen, sitting at their sewing on the fourth floor in the back street, under the lamp in the parlour, where the arm-chairs, which were beginning to show signs of wear, had so many little pieces of work to cover them —and all at once she laughed.

"But what are you laughing at?" asked Miss Roed.

"Oh, it was something I thought of."

And suddenly Ida threw off the bedclothes and put her bare feet on the floor.

"Oh," she said, "wait a moment"; and she ran in her nightdress to the chiffonier. "I've got something for the children." And, standing before the open chiffonier, so that Miss Roed should not see the flowers and pack-

ages hidden inside, she poured some French cakes out of a bag.

"They're lovely," she said gaily, putting one into Miss Roed's mouth before jumping back into bed.

"You're always thinking of others," said Miss Roed.

Ida only laughed:

"No, I think of myself," she said, looking up at the ceiling.

She heard Miss Roed go downstairs and then got up again and turned the key twice in the lock, as softly as though she were afraid someone might hear her. She began to dress as quickly as she could, with something of the air of a schoolgirl engaged in pranks: oh, there was plenty to do—there was a great deal to do—

She pulled out the drawers of the chiffonier and took out the damask table-cloth and the old cups, and the silver coffee-pot, which was wrapped in paper. There were the old dessert plates too and the candlestick, which she fitted with the candles; here he was to sit, with the cigarettes by him.

Hm, the last time she had decorated a table with flowers was for Olivia and her boys. Yes, that was in May—to think that it was no longer ago—than the twenty-second of May.

She lighted the candles and looked if the water was boiling—yes, there must be a rose in his glass.

She went to and fro and stood surveying the table.

Oh yes, he would recognize the old things sure enough.

She listened and looked at the clock, as she laid two gaily coloured bed-spreads over the beds. It was hardly time yet. And she sat down at the table, in his place, and waited. Now someone was coming, the door opened downstairs; but it was only one of the porters.

Perhaps he had been kept, perhaps he was not coming. She felt quite sure he would not come, and she sat

looking at one thing after another, as though she would impress on her memory how pretty it was.

And the candles, she would let them burn anyhow, burn right down, till they went out.

But the rose she quietly took out of his glass.

She had heard no one on the stairs, when there was a quiet knock at the door, a double knock, like that of the young men who have been in the Service, and she opened.

"Oh, it's you," she said.

Karl Eichbaum stole in: "There wasn't a soul that saw me," he said.

"But Miss Helgesen always sits close to the door," said Ida.

She locked the door—unconsciously they had both spoken in a whisper—and Karl took off his overcoat.

"Well, here we are," he said and shook her hand.

"Yes," said Ida with a laugh. "This is where you're to sit." She pointed to the easy chair.

"This is a devil of a feast," said Karl, stretching his legs, as he sat down to the white table.

"Isn't it?" said Ida; she felt she had thought just the same.

"Drinks too, I'm blowed," said Karl.

Ida poured the coffee into the old cups, while Karl viewed the table with an air of satisfaction and they talked of the old things, the cake basket and the candlesticks: "They used to keep guard over the sea-shells at home," said he.

"Yes, they stood in the corner window," said Ida. She had a vision of the old marble table at the "Bakke" with the shells and the bowl that came from an auction at Horsens and the two silver cups, prizes from agricultural shows.

"But we haven't any home-made cakes, all the same," she said.

Karl helped himself liberally to the cakes there were, and to the liqueur too. "Yes," he said, "we used to bag some from Schröder"—he was thinking of the dented cake-tin at the "Bakke"; "stealing's such good sport—"

"Yes, it's exciting," said Ida with a wag of her head; Karl looked at her, he always thought it so funny when she did that.

"Used you to steal at home too?" he asked.

"Yes, often," said Ida hurriedly; but suddenly she turned pale.

"How was that?" asked Karl.

Ida looked vacantly before her and said slowly, in a low tone: "I had to."

Neither spoke for a few moments.

Then she pulled herself together and raised her glass, and they clinked.

"Good luck!" said Karl. He still kept his eyes on her.

But all at once Ida felt embarrassed or whatever it was, and could find nothing to say; while Karl, also perhaps a little nervous, smoked in silence, reading the inscription on the presentation coffee-pot, till all at once he blurted out:

"Yes, old Brandt was deuced fond of coffee."

They both laughed, and Ida fetched the old photographs. Karl took them from her and suddenly the ice was broken. He moved over to the sofa, taking his glass with him, and they pointed out the windows of all the visitors' rooms, and the paths, where they led, and the people—*there* was so-and-so and *there* was another.

"There are you, Ida," said Karl, keeping the photograph in his hands.

"Yes."

"And there's the bailiff," said Karl.

"Yes, he's dead."

Ida sat looking at the bailiff, with her head close

to Karl's. "How suddenly he died," she said slowly.

"He shot himself," said Karl.

"No!"

"Yes," said Karl, and he too kept his eyes on the bailiff's little face; "didn't you know that? Why, it was that anæmic creature, Caroline Begtrup, who wouldn't accept him. So he went up to the corn loft and shot himself—it was just after he'd set the hands to work—"

"But what has happened to her?"

"She's married and lives at Næstved," said Karl, putting down the photograph.

He leaned back and twitched his nose.

"It was quite a sensible thing to do, though," he said; "for strike me dead if there's much to live for—"

Ida looked up at the candles:

"Oh yes," she said slowly and quietly.

Karl, who was sitting with his hands in his pockets, nodded after a while at the candlestick:

"Yes, if one was even a farmer."

"You could be that," said Ida, with another cast of the head.

"Yes, thanks"—Karl sniffed—"and how—"

But suddenly he changed his tone, taking his hands out of his pockets and rubbing them:

"It's jolly nice here all the same."

Ida's eyes were still on the candles:

"He was such a quiet person, though."

"Who?"

"Bailiff Krog."

"Yes," said Karl with a nod; "but it's generally the quiet ones that get bitten."

He got up from the sofa to stretch his legs and went round looking at one piece of furniture after another.

"That's the old bureau," he said; "it's incredible."

Tears came into Ida's eyes, she did not know why; perhaps it was the tone of his words.

"Yes, look," she said.

And she opened the drawers, while he held the candlestick, and showed him everything: she showed him Olivia's children and the heather she had gathered on her holiday and her father's old account books with their pale ink and many other things, while they talked of all they remembered.

"No, no!" she said, snatching a book from him; he had put down the candlestick on the desk. "No, no, that's my poetry book."

"The Lord help us," said Karl.

But he insisted on seeing the book.

"No," said Ida, holding on to it; "you mayn't. One puts such a lot of silly things into it."

"But then you can tell me which are your favourite verses," he said. It was chiefly the pretty way she blushed that amused him.

"Well—this is my favourite."

And she showed him a page, keeping the others down with her hands: it was Solveig's Song. Karl held the candlestick and read it.

"It's a regular lady's poem," he said; but then his tone softened:

"Why do you like that best?"

"Why—because it's the prettiest. But," she added, "it's a long time ago now—I copied it out of a book of music."

She put down the poetry book and a little photograph fell out of it. It was the Councillor's old white horse. And they both laughed at the time it danced in the middle of the street at Horsens, because a barrel-organ was playing a tune the old circus horse knew; and the Councillor hadn't a very good seat, and the barrel-organ

went on playing, and the horse went on dancing, in the middle of the street.

"But it had been a handsome animal," said Karl.

"Now the Butterman's been to look at the place," he said a moment later, putting away the photograph.

"Will they buy it, do you think?" asked Ida.

"They'll do that right enough," said Karl, looking into the flame of the candles.

"I only hope they'll keep it up well," said Ida nodding. "No, look here—no, look here—"

She seized hold of Karl's hands. He was rummaging everywhere—there were Mother's rings and brooches and gold chain and Father's signet ring, and he was tumbling them all over.

"Mind the candles!" she said.

The candlestick was staggering on the desk, as she tried to keep his hands off.

"Here are valuables, by golly!" laughed Karl.

"And here's my savings bank book," said Ida gaily; she held the buff book in her left hand and gave it a smack with her right. But suddenly she turned quite pale and put the book down quietly—

Karl was also silent for a moment.

"But mayn't I ever thank you, Ida?" he said in a very low voice.

"No," she said simply; it could scarcely be heard.

For an instant Karl had put both hands on her waist. Then he took them away. Ida did not move.

"Hush, hush—"

They heard someone on the stairs.

"It's Miss Petersen— The lights, the lights—"

Karl managed to put out the candles.

"Brandt, Brandt," called Miss Petersen, knocking at the door.

And Ida answered from her bed in the dark:

"Yes, yes, I'm awake."

They heard her go away again, before Karl whispered, in a schoolboyish tone:

"But I can stay a little while yet, can't I?—we can sit by the stove."

Ida made no reply, but she sat down before the door of the stove, which Karl had opened. They heard no sound but that of the falling cinders, while the glare came and went over their faces.

"How quiet it is here," said Karl.

"Yes," said Ida; "they're very quiet today."

They only spoke in whispers and then they were silent again. Karl was looking into the fire.

"But you're much too patient, Ida," he said.

"How—?"

"Why, you have every right to *ask* a great deal more."

"How do you mean, ask more—?"

Both their heads were stretched forward, just in the same way, and their words came slowly in the same tone.

"Well, I mean, ask more of life, you know," said Karl.

They were silent again and heard nothing but the falling cinders.

"Eichbaum—you must go now."

"Yes," said Karl; "in two minutes." What he really loved was *never* to get up when he was once seated.

"Do you know what, Ida?" he said, still looking into the fire: "I'm really a home bird."

"Yes." Her voice was very faint.

Karl put out his hand in the dark and took hers.

"Good-bye and thanks."

"Thanks," she whispered.

She stood up and lighted the candles. She looked so pale as she did it, with a pallor that seemed to shine.

Karl put on his coat and opened the door noiselessly.

"Good-night," he whispered, and stole out.

Ida listened to his footsteps behind the door; no, there was nobody about—and now he was downstairs.

She locked the door again. The same smile dwelt in her face as she opened and shut the drawers and put everything away. But the candles she would not put out. They should go on burning—till after tea.

Then she went downstairs.—

Karl was out in the street. His eyes seemed to have grown strangely wide, as he walked along chewing his cigar.

"My word, yes, she's a straight one," he said, nodding to himself.

Without being exactly aware of it, he continued to walk up and down within sight of the corner window, where the light was burning.—

Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was sitting over her embroidery, got up briskly and called:

"Julius, Mr. Karl has come home."

Karl stayed in his own room till tea time. After tea he asked his mother if she would not like a game of bezique. They were still playing—and there was a good deal of cigar smoke in the room—when Mrs. Gersdorff came over to say good-night.

"Dear me," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "you must sit down and have a glass of Madeira."

"Thank you, my dear," said her sister, taking a seat; "do you think it's a good thing at night?"

Julius brought in the Madeira and the French biscuits, and they took them under the lamp in the corner.

When Karl and Mrs. Gersdorff were gone, Mrs. von Eichbaum went round and opened the windows: overnight smoke was unpleasant.—

Next morning, when Ida came home from her walk,

Karl was standing on the steps leading to the office. Ida had almost expected it. She went up the steps and took a rose out of her cloak:

"You ought to have had it yesterday," she said.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister were taking a final glance at the Lindholms' flat. The Mourier family were to arrive by the morning train.

The two ladies went through the rooms and were satisfied.

"And, my dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "what a good thing it was that we put away so many superfluities."

The "superfluities" were certain rather doubtful silk curtains which the Lindholms had "draped" everywhere and which were an abomination to Mrs. von Eichbaum: "Heavens, they only put them there to hide the stains," she said to her sister; "and then they simply collect the dust."

Mrs. Gersdorff nodded:

"Besides," she said, "fancy having all that in the house with Mary's illness."

Mrs. von Eichbaum passed to the next room before saying:

"It has been disinfected.

"And," she added, "of course we shall say nothing about it." Mrs. von Eichbaum's mind was still running on Mary's illness.

"Heavens, Mille," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "we know what imagination will do. And in these days, when people *insist* on being ill—"

Beyond the boudoir was Kate's room. It was empty. Miss Kate wanted to bring her own furniture. Mrs. von Eichbaum stood in the doorway surveying the bare walls.

"Well," she said, "Kate must arrange this to please herself."

Julius came and announced that the cab was there.

"Thank you, Julius. And then Ane will lay the tea table, with lightly boiled eggs."

The sisters went down and got into the cab, on the box of which sat Julius in a cockaded silk hat and his own greatcoat.

As the train came in to the platform a blonde and rather full face was thrust out of the window of a first-class carriage. It was Miss Kate.

"There they are," she said. She had caught sight of the two sisters, who were waving their handkerchiefs exactly at the level of their faces.

Mrs. Mourier and Miss Kate stepped on to the platform and there was shaking of hands and the three old friends kissed each other, all with tears in their eyes.

"Dear Vilhelmine," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "to think of having you here."

Her voice actually trembled. Mrs. von Eichbaum was always so easily moved when she met any of "the friends of her youth" again.

"And you had calm weather across the Belts," she said.

"Lovely, my dear, lovely—I sat on deck with my coffee, while Kate fed the gulls."

Mrs. Mourier, who gave the impression of being as broad as both the sisters put together, had a rather forcible way of speaking, influenced by Jutland country-house life.

Julius emptied the hand baggage out on to the platform, ending with a large basket provided with an enormous handle.

"Dear girls," said Mrs. Mourier, "this is for you

from Mourier. He saw us far as Fredericia—his orchids are his pride."

"Then you will take that, Julius," said Mrs. von Eichbaum. "But where is Kate?"

"Oh, she's gone to fetch the dogs," said Mrs. Mourier.

"Dogs!" said Mrs. von Eichbaum. "Heavens, Mine, have you brought those animals with you?" Mrs. von Eichbaum had a nervous horror of all dogs.

"My dear, I should never have got Kate to come without them."

Mrs. Gersdorff caught sight of Kate, dragging along two jubilant greyhounds in a leash.

"There," said Kate, who wore a black travelling dress that looked like a riding habit and had a mass of silver bangles on her arm; "say how d'ye do to your aunts."

Thus invited, the two greyhounds proceeded to jump up at Mrs. Gersdorff and Mrs. von Eichbaum, who defended themselves with their hands.

"Dear Kate, they *are* a little obstreperous."

They all came out into the station yard and Mrs. Mourier and the sisters got into the cab, while Kate stayed behind.

"Then I'll drive with Viktoria and the dogs," she said.

Viktoria, a lady in a grey walking dress, was the maid.

Mrs. Gersdorff nodded a "Good-day" to her, and Mrs. von Eichbaum said:

"Julius can bring the animals."

But Miss Kate had already called another cab, into which she stepped with Viktoria by her side and both dogs on the back seat.

Mrs. von Eichbaum, regarding this arrangement with some nervousness, exclaimed:

"Heavens, Vilhelmine, what trouble you will have with those animals in a town flat!"

"But," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "they are a lovely pair of creatures."

The two cabs drove off, Kate's in the rear. She turned round and looked at the vehicle in front with Julius's straight back on the box.

"There," she said; "now we're fixed."

When they arrived at the flat they went through the rooms under the guidance of the sisters. Mrs. Mourier said: "This is quite nice," and promptly sat down on the sofa with Mrs. Gersdorff; while Kate, after making a preliminary survey from the dining-room door, went through the rest of the flat with Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"There's just room for my wash-stand here," she said, when they reached her own room. "And where is Viktoria to sleep?"

"There is an attic for the maid," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Kate shrugged up her shouders so that all the bangles jingled: "Oh well, we can arrange that all right."

Mrs. von Eichbaum, holding herself rather stiffly, turned to the maid and said:

"Will Thora bring her things in here for the present?"

As they drove from the station Mrs. von Eichbaum had decided for some unknown reason to call the maid Viktoria Thora.

On the drawing-room sofa Mrs. Gersdorff and Mrs. Mourier were already deep in their plans for the winter, and the former could be heard saying, as the concluding item:

"And then, Vilhelmine, on Sundays we shall have Petri."

Julius announced that tea was on the table and they

rose to go in, but Kate insisted on washing first. "Where is there a bathroom?" she asked, with a matter-of-course air. But there *was* no bathroom.

"After all, you know, Kate," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "this is a hired house; one brings one's own rubber baths—"

Kate disappeared with Viktoria into her mother's bedroom, while the others went to table and very soon the dogs began howling and scratching at the bedroom door, till Kate let them in. "You know, Vilhelmine," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, sitting at the table, "if this goes on it will be rather awkward for the Lindholms' polished doors—"

The three ladies discussed Aline Feddersen. Mrs. Gersdorff believed she had been in Geneva—

And probably she was there still—

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "taking the most charitable view, it's a thing we cannot understand."

Mrs. Mourier, who had finished her second egg, said:

"No—but, you see, Feddersen has never been anything else but the support of his family—"

"Anything *else?* My dear Mine—"

"Yes, and Mourier's quite right: these daily marital doles are really not enough."

There was a very brief pause, till Mrs. von Eichbaum said (no one could have told whether the sisters really understood):

"Ah yes, my dear, but where do you suppose one would find many men like Mourier?"

When Kate came in and took her seat, her mother changed the subject to Ludvigsbakke. They had been to look at the place and Mourier thought the price suitable.

"And what do you say, Kate?" asked Mrs. Gersdorff.

Kate, who was stuffing pieces of roll into the grey-

hounds' mouths, thought it might be quite endurable if it was rebuilt, and Mrs. Mourier asked after Karl.

"My dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "he's looking after his office."

And Mrs. Gersdorff added:

"He's as regular as clockwork."

But Kate, who had finished feeding the dogs, asked, with an air of interest she had not shown before:

"Where can one ride in this town?"—

After lunch the sisters walked the few steps home. They did not say much till they reached Mrs. von Eichbaum's entrance hall and took their things off.

"My dear Lotte," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "give them time to settle down."

"It's only natural," Mrs. Gersdorff seemed to be smoothing out something with her hands; "the first day —there's so apt to be some commotion."

The sisters went in and sat down, and Mrs. von Eichbaum, who after all seemed to breathe more freely on her own good sofa, remarked:

"And as to clothes, you know, it only means going with them a few times when they're shopping—"

Mrs. Gersdorff nodded, and her sister reflected a moment before saying:

"At present she dresses quite like a young woman."

"And the dogs, my dear," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "it was almost like a circus—"

And, as though it had anything particular to do with the greyhounds, she added after a little pause:

"But, you know, it won't be very easy for a man—"

Mrs. von Eichbaum, following her own train of thought, said, with a trace of nervousness in her voice:

"And the maid; Ane will have to give her a few lessons, no doubt.— And now it will be best to leave them in peace for today."

"Just so," agreed Mrs. Gersdorff, getting up; "let them settle down and so on—"

In the doorway she asked: "Are you coming across to tea this evening?"

"Thanks, dear," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum; "I have little Brandt, you know, this evening—I believe she's only free on Tuesdays."

"Oh, her— Well, good-bye then, Mille."

Mrs. Gersdorff was just going, when the bell rang. It was the porter from the Lindholms' house, bringing the basket of orchids. At the bottom of it were some purple grapes.

"Mille," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "do you know, they're just like what one sees in the vineyards. I believe they will keep till Sunday—and anyhow I was thinking of having the Schleppegrells too, now that we've got the four ducks from Vallö."

Mrs. von Eichbaum arranged the orchids in two glass bowls. When she had finished she stood and looked at them.

"Yes," she said, "they are beautiful—but still, I find those flowers *are* rather alarming."

"But you see them nowadays at all the country houses," said Mrs. Gersdorff.

She left with her share of flowers and grapes.—

In the evening Karl stood waiting for Ida outside the hospital gate, while the soft snow fell on his new coat.

"How cold your hands are," he said when she appeared.

They walked side by side, while he chatted in his drawling way and Ida scarcely answered him and seemed preoccupied.

"Blest if I don't think you're afraid," said Karl with a laugh. "I can understand that though—" And he put

his arm through Ida's, to imply that they would stand by one another.

When they came in Mrs. von Eichbaum rose from the sofa and received Ida at the door of the morning room:

"It was nice of you to come."

All three sat down and Mrs. von Eichbaum made conversation; she talked of the Hospital, saying that its work was a real blessing, while Karl threw sly glances at Ida, who seemed to be growing smaller and smaller in her corner of the sofa.

"And then it is so satisfactory to know that the girls belong to a good class. You know, Karl, Adelaide has begun to learn nursing at the Frederik's Hospital."

Adelaide was the daughter of a Colonel of their acquaintance.

"Has she?" said Karl; "I expect that was the wisest thing she could do."

"Heavens, Karl," said his mother; "it seems to me extremely creditable, nothing else."

There was a little pause. But then Karl thought it was time for him to exert himself and he began to tell a story from the office ("it's an incredible menagerie," he said) about a mad father who wanted to shut up his sane son. The father drove up, wearing socks outside his boots, and insisted on leaving his son at the Hospital.

"The son was in patent leathers," explained Karl, and he went on with his story, while Mrs. von Eichbaum laughed and Ida smiled: oh, she was so grateful to him for talking. And Karl kept on telling stories (he could actually see Ida growing bigger on the sofa) till at last all three laughed aloud and gaily. Mrs. von Eichbaum was always glad when Karl talked: "And he's so full of humour," she always said to her sister. Now she said:

"But really, Karl, there's nothing to laugh at—"

Ida asked about her lace-work for the bed curtain, whether it was difficult to learn.

Mrs. von Eichbaum showed her and explained:

"You can try for yourself," she said.

And she gave Ida a lesson, showing her how to move the little pins, while Karl asked:

"Will Mother allow me to smoke?" and with the cigarette between his fingers he sat watching Ida's bent head by the side of his mother's.

Ida continued by herself and the little pins could be heard briskly hitting against one another, while Mrs. von Eichbaum looked on and Karl said:

"Why, it's going like a house on fire." And his mother added in a friendly tone:

"Yes, young people have deft fingers."

Julius had already announced tea, when Karl said—for he couldn't help saying something the whole time:

"We might get Aunt Charlotte to come across for whist, Mother."

"Yes, you're right, we could make a four. I can ask her before tea."

When Mrs. von Eichbaum was gone Karl got up from his chair and went over to Ida's corner of the sofa:

"Well, what about it?" he said smiling down at her.

"Well—"

Ida looked up in his face and smiled in her turn:

"You are so kind," she said. They both spoke in half-whispers, like children behind their teacher's back.

"Yes, I'll say that for myself," said Karl with a laugh.

He opened the piano in the dining-room and struck up a waltz for all he was worth.—

Mrs. von Eichbaum was over in her sister's part

of the house. She invited her to play whist, saying:

"My dear, she's really a charming girl—well brought-up and charming—"

Mrs. Gersdorff was only glad to hear it.

"And in a way, you know, she has always belonged to the circle."

Mrs. von Eichbaum came back, and on seeing Karl at the piano she said:

"That's right, Karl. What a long time it is since you played."

"Yes," replied Karl; "and what a good thing for the neighbours."

But he did not stop playing.

The waltz seemed to hang in the air during the meal, and Ida got up and asked if she might pour out Mrs. von Eichbaum's second cup of tea, and Julius had to bring in a fresh supply of bread, because Karl had such a huge appetite.

"Thank you," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, taking her cup; "yes, there's no meal I enjoy like my good tea."

They talked on, till Mrs. von Eichbaum said:

"I dare say you know that Mr. and Mrs. Mourier are seriously thinking of buying old Ludvigsbakke—very good friends of ours—"

Yes, Mr. von Eichbaum had told her.

"But, Karl," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "Kate doesn't care for the house itself."

"Oh," said Ida, "but I think it's such a dear old house!"

"Hm," muttered Karl, still eating; "I expect she'd like to have a butter churn over the front door for an escutcheon."

Mrs. von Eichbaum could not have said why she let this pass, but all she remarked was:

"Well, people's requirements are so different."

Mrs. Gersdorff came in while they were still at table.

"But don't let me disturb you—"

"Yes," she said to Ida, "one has heard so much good of you already."

When they got up Ida helped Karl to open the card table.

"No, no, not like that," said Karl, giving her a slap over the hands.

"Will Julius bring the candles?" said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"But I play so badly," said Ida as they took their seats. She had Karl for partner.

"Karl," said Mrs. Gersdorff, who was dealing; "we don't talk when we're playing cards."

The sisters played slowly, glancing at their cards with an air of sagacity; they gave the impression of a game of chess. Ida, who was constantly biting her lip, turned red every time she laid a card on the table, while Karl chattered incessantly to his aunt.

"Karl," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "whist is whist."

Karl held his tongue and watched Ida, who was gaining confidence and took her tricks with a little eager jerk like a child.

"It's your lead, Emilie," said Mrs. Gersdorff.

Mrs. von Eichbaum's only answer was a nod; both sisters showed a hint of a double chin when they were at cards.

"That was ours," said Ida, unconsciously drawing a long breath, but her eyes were shining.

"Miss Ida looks as if she'd just escaped from a Turkish bath," said Karl.

"Miss Brandt plays better than you do," said his mother.

"Ye-es. Well, good luck to us," he said, blinking his eyes and holding out his thumb to Ida, who pushed her

thumb against it. "Good luck to us," she said, and they both laughed.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister discussed the game, spreading the tricks over the table.

"But look at me, my dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "that was my only trump."

They went on playing, and now Karl grew keen; he and Ida were winning all the time.

"But Ida plays a jolly good hand," he said, forgetting to call her "Miss."

"Yes," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "it's a very enjoyable game."

Julius brought in the grapes and the Madeira, which they took between two rubbers, talking of old days, of Ludvigsbakke and of old Brandt. "He was an excellent man," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Karl raised his glass.

"Well," he said, "shall we wish Miss Brandt welcome?"

"Yes, we must do that," said his mother; "it was a great pleasure to see you."

They all drank and then they were to change places. As they did so Karl, who was in high spirits, began to sniff at his aunt's back.

"When did Aunt take to patchouli?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Gersdorff, sniffing in turn at her own sleeves; "I can't make it out, but something has been hanging about me all day—"

"Dear me," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "I've found the same. It must be from Kate. I noticed it at once, my dear, on the platform in the open air—and you know what a horror I have of anything penetrating."

Karl said as he took his seat:

"It's Ess Bouquet. It's a man's scent, quite a pleasant one all the same."

"Heavens, Karl," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "you can't mean that?—a gentleman never smells of anything but his clean linen, I should hope."

"It's Ida's deal," said Mrs. von Eichbaum. It was the first time she had called her by her Christian name.

They resumed the game. Karl was quite keen and silent with his mother for partner.

"That's yours, Miss Brandt," he said.

Ida was thinking what a likeness there was after all between Karl and his mother. It was the same face.

When the two rubbers were finished they left the card table and Karl and Ida sat on the corner sofa, where Ida looked in a stereoscope.

"Well," said Karl, taking her hand for an instant, as it lay on the sofa; "you're a fine whist-player."

"It's been so lovely here," said Ida under her breath.

"Yes," said Karl grudgingly; "this evening was all right."

They sat side by side, without saying much, while the lamp above them hummed softly and Ida looked at the foaming Swiss waterfalls in the stereoscope.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister sat on the big sofa.

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "it's a relief to sit down. It has been such a day of agitation."

Mrs. von Eichbaum nodded, and, their thoughts following the same channel, said after a short silence:

"Heavens, my dear, when I saw the dogs I can't deny I was terrified—"

The sisters said nothing for some moments, while Mrs. von Eichbaum watched the two young people with a friendly eye:

"Quite good company for each other," she said with a nod and a smile.

Ida moved over to the table, where the sisters were sitting.

Soon after, when Karl was helping Ida on with her cloak in the hall, he opened the door of his own room.

"This is where I live," he said, taking a step or two into the room; the lamp was alight on the table.

"And here are some of the horses," he went on, going a few steps farther, while Ida followed.

"Yes," she said.

And they both stood in silence, only for a moment, before the two pictures, which neither of them could have seen, till Karl said:

"Well, now we'll be moving."

And he closed the door behind them.

The sisters were still standing in the semi-darkness of the dining-room. Mrs. von Eichbaum was unusually eloquent in her praises of Ida and the whole Brandt family.

"Yes," said Mrs. Gersdorff, "she's quite a nice girl and shows herself grateful."

"My dear Charlotte," said Mrs. von Eichbaum—there was something in her sister's tone which she almost felt bound to reprove; "she comes from an excellent home, you remember. Her father was the Councillor's right hand and was treated almost as an equal."

Mrs. Gersdorff thought a moment and said:

"Yes, she's quite nice and unassuming, in spite of her being so well off."

Mrs. von Eichbaum made no reply; she seemed rather absent-minded since Karl and Ida had gone; and suddenly her sister asked:

"Do you think, Emilie, that I ought to put my grapes in sawdust?"

Mrs. von Eichbaum was doubtless following another train of thought, but she replied: "Don't you think they lose some of their flavour like that?"

Mrs. Gersdorff agreed that they might. She would just wrap each bunch very carefully in tissue paper.

THE STREET DOOR of the Eichbaum house had just closed behind Karl and Ida.

"Oh, I was so afraid," said Ida, waving her elbows up and down like a bird flapping its wings.

"Yes, anybody could see that—" Karl put his arm through hers, but Ida said promptly, as though to excuse herself:

"You see, I had only seen her at Ludvigsbakke, sitting at the head of the table and taking her walks—past the pantry window."

"Yes," said Karl laughing, "I know Mother when she's rigged out for a walk."

"With the big lace hat," said Ida.

"She's got it still."

And they both laughed again, not at the hat, but it seemed they had to laugh—now, out here, under the sky.

"But this evening it was all so nice," said Ida.

They came out into the Ride, and the snow, which had stopped falling, lay like a soft carpet in the stillness. Karl and Ida walked in silence, as though they were wandering through a forest.

"But how fond she is of you," said Ida quietly; her voice sounded so gentle.

"Yes," said Karl in the same hushed tone; and they had gone a little way before he said slowly, as though pondering:

"But it's rotten all the same."

"What is?"

"Everything."

"No," said Ida, more clearly but not yet aloud, and shook her head.

They walked on again in silence.

"Look," said Ida with a smile; "we're the first people to walk in the snow."

"Yes," replied Karl.

And they both looked down at the soft white surface, in which their footprints showed side by side.

"It's so pretty," said Ida, still smiling.

But when they came to the narrow corner by the tram-line, she freed herself of his arm and went on in front—almost running. Karl followed, with his eyes on her shapely, slender back. Then a snowball came whizzing and caught her in the neck:

"Take that."

"Karl!" she cried. But he kept it up and she got another and another, one behind the ear and one on the cheek, till she turned round to defend herself: "There's one for you," she said, belabouring him with loose snow, masses of it, in the face, on the shoulders, back and front, all down his coat.

"No, we're making a row in the street."

All at once she shook herself and stopped: there was a policeman standing motionless in the middle of the white avenue. But Karl kept on, in high spirits, and on rounding the corner he crowed like a cock.

"That'll make them think it's five o'clock," he said, laughing up at the respectable middle-class windows. Suddenly he broke into a trot, stamping his feet, and Ida kept up with him, as though they both *had* to be on the move, while Karl whistled.

"Monday is Miss Helgesen's birthday," said Ida.

"Is it going to be a big affair?" asked Karl, as they trotted on.

"Yes, we shall make a pudding in the kitchen."

"What kind of a pudding?"

Ida laughed: "It's to be a rum pudding," she said, stamping her feet.

"Can any male men sneak in?"

"If you came with Qvam," said Ida.

Karl nodded, as they tramped on, side by side, and then he said:

"He wears Jaeger underclothes."

Ida laughed: "How do you know?"

"I've seen them."

"Now we're home," said Ida. They had reached the gate.

"But I'll go as far as the paling with you," said Karl.

And they walked in solemnly, past the watchman, into the big, silent courtyard, where the corridors, faintly lighted, seemed half asleep.

"Listen to our footsteps," said Ida in a whisper; "what an echo there is."

"Yes," said Karl.

They were passing the Doctors' corridor.

"Hush, what's that?" she seized Karl's arm; but then she laughed quietly, still listening. Up in the Doctors' corridor there was a sound of laughter and footsteps: "It's the students," she whispered. They heard a great noise inside, everybody shouting and laughing, and Karl ran up the little flight of steps and flung the door open:

"What's all this?" he cried in a sharp voice.

"The Senior Physician!" somebody shouted. It was Qvam; and then there was much opening and shutting of doors, while Karl burst into a laugh that rang all over the yard. Ida joined in the laugh, and so did the doctors in the dark, they all laughed—till suddenly all was hushed.

"The watchman," said Ida, walking on.

The night watchman came towards them, slowly, carrying his big lantern.

"Good evening," he said.

"Good evening."

"It was old Jensen," Ida whispered, a little alarmed, and Karl took her arm.

They passed under the archway, where it was quite dark.

"This is haunted," whispered Ida.

"What does that mean?"

"Why, they pass through here, those who are going to die."

"Who has seen it?"

"The watchmen," said Ida. And after a moment: "This is the way to the chapel, you know."

"Are you afraid of them?" asked Karl.

"No, not now," whispered Ida, nodding.

They passed the laundry and came to the lamp at the gate of the Mental Department. Beyond lay the house, silent and closed. All around the trees were covered with snow. Ida paused with her arm in Karl's:

"How pretty it is here," she said.

She looked around at it all:

"If only the stars would come out," she said.

"Good-night."

Karl heard the door open and shut.

It was a few days later. Ida came into the office in the evening with an admittance order. It was late, and Karl already had his coat on and was about to extinguish the last gas-jet, the one over the counter.

"What a long time it is since I've seen you," said Karl.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I can't always come," said Ida, not knowing why she spoke almost in a whisper; and she handed him the paper, bending her head forward under the light.

Karl touched her hand as he took it.

"Ida," was all he said; he bent down and kissed her shining neck. "Ida."

Without a word she had freed her hands. Slowly and cautiously, almost as though she were afraid to set her feet to the ground, she crossed the dim courtyard. There was a great stillness in her heart.—

Miss Kjær was standing at the door of the dining-room, where the nurses were talking loudly and all together, and she put her arm round Ida's waist as she came in. But Ida gently pushed it away with her hand.

"What now?" said Miss Kjær, as Ida took her seat by the door; "are we not allowed to touch the Maid any more?"

All down the table the nurses were chatting excitedly. Miss Kaas, Miss Boserup and Miss Roed had moved their chairs out into the room and were talking loudly and with animation of the new Club Miss Boserup was trying to get up, a Nurses' Club for both Hospitals, Frederik's and the Municipal; a list had been sent out and a meeting was to be called.

"He can't refuse us the use of the Lecture Theatre," said Miss Kaas. "He" was the Professor and the word was fiercely underlined, while Miss Boserup flung out her hands in the direction of Miss Krohn of the "quiet corridor" and declared that even if we were women (this was a stock phrase with Miss Boserup) it must surely be possible to work up sufficient interest in our calling to enable us to claim our rights—

The three continued the discussion in very loud tones, while Miss Helgesen, entrenched behind the tea-urn, remarked:

"At any rate nothing should be done without consulting the Medical Staff."

Miss Kaas, though affecting to ignore this, puffed out her chest contemptuously and said:

"I'll be glad to act as Secretary, if it's the idea that we're to be independent." Miss Kaas was always Secretary of something, whether it was an appeal for subscriptions or the presentation of an address.

Miss Roed suggested that the objects they must keep in view—"but I certainly agree with Miss Helgesen that the Medical Staff must be consulted"—were shorter hours of duty and an allowance for holiday expenses—

"First of all we want better food," put in Miss Overud.

But Miss Friis, who was leaning back in her chair with shoulders raised high, remarked to Miss Roed:

"Not for me, thank you. One would never get away from one's fellow-nurses—even when off duty."

Ida had not spoken. It was as though she sat in bright solitude, alone in the firelight, amongst all the others.

Miss Kaas turned to her suddenly:

"But what does Brandt say?"

"I am listening," said Ida, still with the same look in her face.

But Miss Boserup said:

"I don't suppose it interests Miss Brandt. She has her bank book, you know—" And she clapped her right hand on the palm of her left.

"Yes, and well Boserup knows it," said Miss Friis to Krohn.

Miss Kjær, resenting Boserup's impertinence, went over to Ida and stroked her hair:

"Never mind, Maid," she said; "the main thing is that we'll get off the subscription."

Ida had evidently not heard a word of it. She glanced up at Kjær's face with a smile.

"Have you noticed their shadows?" she whispered, with a laugh in her eyes; "how funny they look."

On the wall behind the excited ladies their huge shadows bobbed up and down like a monkey on a stick.

And they both laughed at it, but with a different kind of laughter; Ida's was very quiet, as though it came from a far-off world—

Until Miss Kaas came across and spoke to her again about the Club: it really was time the profession made an effort to assert its independence.

But Ida was still laughing quietly to herself.

Miss Friis joined them, and asked Miss Kjær in passing what she was going to wear for Miss Helgesen's birthday.

At this Ida looked up, and a smile spread over her whole face:

"I'm going to wear yellow," she said.

It came so pat that Miss Kaas was cut short and could say no more.

She had just been repeating that it was as a profession they must assert themselves.

Ida went upstairs.

The patients were in bed, except the Doctor in Room "A," who sat on the ledge of the open window, gazing out into the night. Ida was just going in, when there was a sound of keys. It was Qvam, and he took his usual seat on the table.

"Do you think he's mad?" he asked, with a nod in the direction of "A."

Ida shook her head:

"No, I don't," she said.

"Well, I don't either," said Qvam. "Damned if I'd send him to the asylum—"

"But," said Ida, still speaking in a voice the feeling in which seemed foreign to the words she used; "what is he really here for?"

"Ah," said Qvam, lazily crossing his legs; "he's a statistician, you see—"

"Well?"

"And then he has given himself an overdose of the inevitable—of the law of inevitability, as the 'great Norwegians' would call it" (Qvam's tone suggested that he was ready to laugh at his own words). "You see, he's trying to reduce everything to figures—for instance, if an approximately equal number of letter-writers every year put a 7 instead of a 9 in addressing their envelopes, or if in every five years the same number of people get drowned by going on to thin ice—it is because they *must* do it, and in just the same way those who hang themselves must hang themselves and can't even be allowed to shoot themselves when they want to commit suicide—"

Qvam paused for a moment:

"And it would be pretty hard luck," said he, "if one hadn't even the choice of weapons."

"But isn't it true?" asked Ida.

"Ah, that's the question," replied Qvam.

And he added, changing his position:

"It wouldn't be so bad if one only knew which of the columns one was sent here to help fill up."

"Why?" asked Ida; but her voice sounded as if she felt some kind of secret joy.

Qvam looked at her.

"No, dash it all," he said, dropping his feet to the floor; "what does it all matter?

"Now then," he broke off; "I've got these injections to give." He ruffled his hair with his left hand. "After all that's the best thing I can do for these patients."

"But you never give them enough," said Ida.

And a moment later she added—the thoughts came and went so brightly and swiftly in her brain, usually so slow in its working:

"Doctor, the truth is, everybody ought to be happy."

Qvam opened the door of the Women's Ward and they heard a scream and then another:

"There, now the cage is open," he said.

But Ida did not hear him.

The patient in "A" appeared in his doorway, erect and silent:

"I'm just coming, Doctor," said Ida. She was to close the shutters.

"Thank you."

Dr. Qvam passed down the Women's corridor.

"Hanged if she doesn't look like Frithjof when he's listening to music," he said to himself. He was thinking of Ida. Frithjof was a Wagnerite friend of his.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Miss Krohn of the Women's Ward, who was off duty on account of a cold, was sitting on the Men's side, as Ida was in the kitchen: she was the best cook among them.

The basement kitchen was warm. Josefine was busy with the Vienna cakes, spreading white of egg on them with a feather, while Ida beat the yolks for the pudding till she was out of breath.

Josefine talked of her grandmother at Holbæk: *there* they used to make French rolls every Sunday.

From the corridor outside, where the four were at work, came the sound of Bertelsen sawing wood.

"Lovely they were too," said Josefine, alluding to the rolls at Halbæk.

Ida went on beating and the whisk rattled in the bowl.

"They're burning, they're burning," she said, and

Josefine pulled open the oven door and shifted the cakes.

Ida inspected them; the browned cakes had such a delicious smell.

"At the 'Bakke' we made all the paste, Schröder and I. Everything," she said with a laugh; "no one else had a hand in it—"

It was on summer mornings they made cakes, Schröder and she alone, and the windows were open to the dewy fields. Then the hands filed out of the farmyard in a long row, and the bailiff came across and said "Good morning" and was handed a cup of coffee through the window, with a fresh roll.

"But there was no lack of anything there," said Ida. She could never get bags big enough to hold the things.

"Oh," said Josefine, "they get something to eat here too."

The door opened. The nurses stole away from their duty to take a look: "Paws off!" said Ida, giving Miss Kjær a slap over the hand. Boserup stood at the kitchen table surveying the good things; she managed to slip a handful of burnt almonds into her back pocket before she left.

"Mind the door," said Ida; "don't let the Doctors find out."

The warm vapour spread right out to the passages.

There was silence in the kitchen, and again they could hear Bertelsen's saw working through the thick logs.

"Josefine," said Ida; "I think I must give them some cakes out there." She hurriedly put a few cakes on a plate and darted through the corridor into the cellar, where the three old men sat weaving mats mechanically, as though they did not know what they were about, while Porter Sörensen leaned against the wall half asleep and Bertelsen drove his saw fiercely and irregularly through the wood.

"Here you are," said Ida, putting three cakes on each of the mats, as quickly as if she had stolen them.

"Here you are, Bertelsen."

"That's for you, Sörensen," and she handed him the plate.

She heard a voice behind her:

"What's this?"

Qvam was standing in the doorway.

"It's cakes," said Ida with a start, and ran past him.

But Qvam followed her into the kitchen: "Why, this is a regular Sunday," he said, sitting down by the range.

"No, it's Saturday," said Ida laughing.

Qvam got his cake and sat watching the proceedings.

"Do you know what, Miss Brandt?" he said; "you're a real good 'un."—

Ida had finished her work in the kitchen. But all the same Miss Krohn had to take the rest of her duty, as Ida had one or two things to do—shopping. It was already dusk as she crossed the great courtyard at a gay pace. Half-way across she met Eichbaum, but she only smiled and ran past him:

"I'm so busy," she said.

Karl stood following her with his eyes. He had not had a word with her since that evening, and he did not know exactly how things stood—

But on reaching the gate Ida turned again with a smile, holding up her purse and shaking it.

Qvam had just come out of the middle gateway and was watching Ida with his hands in his pockets.

"Do you know what?" he said to Karl; "hanged if that wouldn't make a first-class wife for a country doctor."

"You might propose," said Karl, starting to juggle with his bunch of keys.

"Well," said Qvam thoughtfully; "all the same I should never care to take a wife who had money."

Karl only laughed and sent his keys flying through the air.

"Gad, that's what some of us have to do," he said as he went in.

He did not know how it was that he found himself in the basement kitchen, where Josefine was clearing up.

"It's lovely and warm here," he said, stretching his legs and looking round at all the pots and pans that Ida had been using.

Ida had taken a cab. There were more and more things that she had to buy for Miss Helgesen's birthday: she would give her half a dozen bottles of really good wine—besides the card-tray—

She could quite well do that, if she covered the basket with flowers. And the flowers would come in for the table; it was all to be as gay and bright as possible—

It was Sunday evening, after dinner, at Mrs. Gersdorff's.

When Karl came back from his walk Julius was just bringing in the tea-urn.

In the drawing-room a quiet rubber of whist was being played, while Miss Kate looked on drowsily, sitting in a corner sofa with Miss Fanny Schleppegrell, an underhung lady who was in training for a Maid of Honour.

Karl sat down beside them, and Miss Schleppegrell asked if it was still snowing. It was detestable for one's shoes with this everlasting slush.

Kate turned suddenly to Karl: "Do you know, I imagined you utterly different."

"Oh?" said Karl, quite unperturbed.

"Yes," said Kate; "to tell the truth I expected to find you a good deal more amusing."

She watched the whist-players for a few moments and then asked:

"Does this kind of thing go on every Sunday?"

Karl burst out laughing, and they both laughed together.

Julius announced that tea was ready; but Mrs. Gersdorff said:

"We will wait for the Admiral."

After coffee Admiral Schleppegrell was in the habit of visiting the Club, strolling through the fashionable quarter on the way there and back, and he did not come aboard again till the clock was on the stroke.

But Julius replied:

"The Admiral is in the hall."

They left the card-table, and in the middle of their discussion of the play Mrs. Schleppegrell was heard saying to Mrs. Mourier in her high treble:

"Heavens, Vilhelmine, you can't call that any trouble? One simply writes one's orders on a post card—"

Mrs. Schleppegrell was talking about the "Printemps."

A "Good evening" came from the door of the next room, and the Admiral, who stood rubbing his hands after his walk, remarked:

"Things are going pretty badly with Madame Aline, I hear—"

"Heavens, Schleppegrell, what has happened?" Mrs. Gersdorff took a pace or two towards him.

"Why, Vedel tells me the fellow's left her—so she's planted there—"

There was a moment's silence; Mrs. von Eichbaum covered her eyes with her hands:

"Oh, poor thing," she said softly.

"Well," said the Admiral, offering his arm to Mrs. Mourier; "that's what Vedel said, damme."

They went to table, and through the noise of moving chairs Mrs. Schleppegrell was heard saying in her rather shrill voice:

"Yes, that's men all over."

And Karl, who was pushing forward chairs for Miss Fanny and Kate, muttered under his breath:

"There, the men are going to catch it now."

Kate, who heard him, began to laugh, and Karl said:

"What are you laughing at?"

"Hm," said Kate with a little cast of the head; "I was only thinking that there were two of them in the game."

At the other end Mrs. Schleppegrell went on talking excitedly to the company in general, until Mrs. Mourier, who drank her tea out of a breakfast cup, answered her:

"It's no use, Anna, Mourier's quite right: people take what they can get and you can't stop them—"

The Admiral laughed and said: "Damme, there's something in that"; and Mrs. Gersdorff said, glancing across at Kate and Miss Fanny, by whose place stood a bottle of milk:

"Well, I consider that—"

But Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was still greatly moved and had tears in her eyes, did not hear her sister and announced in a tone of decision:

"Aline cannot be left down there."

Mrs. Schleppegrell gave a start and shot her head round like a wagtail, as she said:

"But may I ask where she's to go? You surely don't suppose she can come here?"

Mrs. von Eichbaum replied slowly:

"It must be our affair, Anna. For we all know Aline—when she is herself."

There was a brief silence, and the Admiral said:

"Yes, damme, it's a most infernal business"; while Mrs. Mourier gave two decided nods and confessed to Mrs. von Eichbaum:

"I'm fond of her, I must say."

And Mrs. Schleppegrell was heard to say, in the midst of a flood of words: "Heavens, Vilhelmine, you know that I don't wish to cast a stone—"

Karl sat hanging his head and looked across at his mother; there was a kind of gleam in his eye.

When they rose from the table Mrs. Mourier went up to Mrs. von Eichbaum and shook her warmly by both hands:

"You're the same as you always were," she said.

"My dear Vilhelmine," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum; "one must stand up for one's friends. And if nobody else is going, I shall go."

Karl was standing behind his mother and lightly touched her shoulder with his moustache, as though caressing it:

"Thanks for tea," he said, below his breath.

Presently Mrs. Schleppegrell too came up: "Emilie," she said, "you don't misunderstand me, I hope—you know that if she came—"

"Anna, all that kind of thing dies down," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum, "as long as it isn't talked about."

Karl had gone into the dining-room. He was in such radiant spirits all at once that he began doing card tricks for the benefit of Kate and Miss Fanny. Then he let the whole pack slide down on to the table in a double stream.

"Can you do that?" he said.

Kate picked up the cards and said:

"Now you're lively enough."

"Yes," said Karl, looking her straight in the face as he clapped one hand against the other; "that's because I'm going to a ladies' party tomorrow."—

The Schleppegrell family walked home after dropping Mrs. Mourier and Kate at their door. The two ladies went in front, discussing Kate:

"Yes, Fanny, I dare say," said Mrs. Schleppegrell; "but all the same if I were in your place I should take the opportunity of practising my French with her. You know, the girl has spent two whole years in Lausanne.

"Schleppegrell," she said, holding her skirts as she stopped; "those ducks came from Malle Bardenfleth of Vallö."—

Mrs. von Eichbaum and Karl had returned to their own side of the house and Karl was standing at the drawing-room door.

"You know, Karl," said his mother; "Kate is very charming, but a little boisterous, I think."

"She seems to be very good fun," replied Karl, pulling at his moustache.

"Yes, but she *does* want polish." Mrs. von Eichbaum made a little deprecatory gesture of the hand: "She has her own peculiar way of sitting down on a chair and things like that. But it all reminds me of Mourier —with his unconventional ideas."

Mrs. von Eichbaum covered up her lace-making cushion as she said:

"I suppose little Ida Brandt won't be free next Tuesday?"

"No, they only let them out of the cage every three weeks."

"That's a pity," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Karl left her.

Mrs. von Eichbaum found many things to put straight before she put out the lamp and retired. She had evidently forgotten to close the door between the drawing-room and the morning-room. This had happened several times of late.—

On reaching home Mrs. Mourier and Kate had partaken of a supplementary meal in their own dining-room.

"God preserve me, I hope we don't have to go there more than once a month."

Mrs. Mourier made no reply, but Kate went on:

"Well, he's the best of the lot—at any rate one can get something out of him."

She was alluding to Karl.

Kate kissed her mother good-night and withdrew to join Viktoria.

Next morning there was a telegram from Mourier that he had bought Ludvigsbakke. Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was going shopping with Vilhelmine, arrived just as Mrs. Mourier and Kate were sitting down to lunch. She preferred as a rule not to take meals there on account of the dogs.

"My dear," she said to Mrs. Gersdorff, "those animals give one no proper peace at table."

But today she stayed on account of the news.

"Well," said Kate, "so now it's settled. All the same Engelholm would have been grander."

In spite of that Kate thought they ought to celebrate the occasion and she sent Viktoria for a bottle of the Burgundy that had lain in their cellar at home since her christening.

The three ladies clinked glasses.

"Well," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "good luck, Vilhelmine, good luck to you."

Kate held out her glass:

"The place is going to be mine, isn't it?" She emptied her glass and went on:

"At any rate we shall be able to get a pair of saddle-horses sent over, as all the live stock's included."

"A *pair*, Kate?"

"Yes, somebody will have to ride with me," said Kate; "I suppose Karl can, when we've got the horses—"

"Yes, if he could get away from the office," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Kate drank another glass of Burgundy, to the arrival of the horses.

Monday evening came.

The nurses who were on day duty had their evening dresses spread out on their beds. But Ida, who had been putting candles in Miss Helgesen's candlesticks, was busy running up and downstairs. She was constantly finding something more for the decoration of Miss Helgesen's table: dessert plates and flower vases and three glass bowls—and all this came out of the old bureau, which was like a conjurer's hat. There were also five little lamps; they would look well among the flowers. Ida brought them down and arranged them.

Miss Helgesen, who was in grey with silk tucks, said to her:

"Thanks, Brandt, thanks; why, it will be as much your party as mine."

"It's only too delightful to have a use for the things," said Ida with a smile. Now she wanted flowers, a wreath round each pudding dish.

"But it's going to be pretty," said Ida, stepping back to see the effect: how bright the old silver was, and what a long time since it had last been used.

Miss Helgesen, apparently wishing to fix her eyes upon something that belonged to herself, picked a coroneted card out of the moss surrounding a little rose-tree:

"Mr. von Eichbaum's roses are quite uncommon."

Karl von Eichbaum's "Gloire de Dijon" made a brave show in the middle of the room. Miss Helgesen had already protected each of the yellow blooms with a little paper ruff.

"Yes," said Ida, peering into one of the buds; "it's very beautiful.

"But whatever is the time?"—she gave a start. All the nurses' gifts of flowers had to be moved to one end of the dining-table; Miss Helgesen carried them and Ida arranged them. Miss Helgesen's place was ringed all round with flower-pots and sprays.

"How lovely Kjær's are," said Ida.

"Everyone has been so kind," replied Miss Helgesen, who was suffering from party nervousness and no longer saw things clearly; "I wonder if we shall have enough chairs."

"We'll bring them down from our own rooms," said Ida, still arranging the flowers. Miss Boserup had sent a bleeding-heart, which smelt a trifle strong and looked as if it had just been potted from a big bed.

"We'll put that on the work-table," said Ida.

There was a knock, but it was only Miss Kjær.

"Oh, what fun!" she said, standing at the end of the table. "It does look grand."

All the candles were alight and the three lamps shone upon the flowers.

"Doesn't it?" said Ida, tossing her head with satisfaction. "But now look," and she lighted the little lamps, red and yellow all round the table.

"Oh, it does look grand," said Kjær again, survey-

ing the silver and flowers and puddings; "it's gorgeous."

"Yes," said Miss Helgesen, "it's quite festive. And it's not such a small room either."

Ida was running away, when there was another knock. It was a porter, with Dr. Qvam's compliments. Dr. Qvam had remembered at the last moment that he ought to give something and had bought a box of dried plums with a Spanish girl in bright colours on the lid.

"Oh, I know those plums," said Miss Kjær, recognizing the box. Miss Helgesen put them on one side:

"It's so nice of the Doctors to show one this attention."

Ida was up in her room, where the yellow dress still lay wrapped in muslin. She had just lighted the spirit-lamp on the dressing-table when there was a knock. It was Miss Boserup, who "really must borrow something for her neck."

"Are you waving your hair?" she suddenly asked.

"Well, I thought I'd just try it," said Ida, turning red as fire.

Boserup had discovered a tulle shawl with long ends in one of Ida's drawers.

"Are you going to use this?" she asked, pointing to a brooch, which she picked up and fastened in the shawl, expressing the opinion that waving only made one's face look older.

"No, it really looks well by candlelight," said Ida.

"Oh yes, if one cares to take the trouble. Not for me, though. But tastes differ, don't they? Good-bye for the present."

Ida locked her door; now she *would* be alone, while she was getting into her dress.

Downstairs the nurses had come in, one by one, each

new arrival being greeted with exclamations over her dress: "No, look at Friis, no, look at Friis," they cried, and then there was comparative silence again; nobody quite knew what to say, because they all thought they were expected to say something out of the common. For the tenth time they began talking about the table, which was almost *too* grand—while Miss Helgesen kept repeating that they must please sit down; and the nurses sat in a row by the wall, with their shoes peeping out under their skirts, as though they had never been there before.

Miss Friis, sitting in an armchair a little away from the rest, with her hands crossed in her lap, was the only one who really inspected the things, and her glance halted at the open-air plant on the work-table.

"That must be Boserup's," she said to Kjær; "heavens, how like her stinginess. But the table's nice."

"It was Ida who arranged it," said Miss Kjær, and she went round telling everybody: "It was Ida." She always called her by her Christian name, when she was not present.

Ida felt that she went red all over, when she opened the door and came in and Kjær cried out:

" 'The Maid's' waved her hair!"

All the nurses got up from their seats; Miss Kjær and Miss Friis clapped their hands and all the others followed suit, while Ida stood with burning cheeks in the full light and a circle was formed about the yellow dress.

"She's stunning," said Miss Kjær, breaking out of the circle and taking Ida round the waist as though she would crush her.

Things were getting a little livelier, and Miss Helgesen was heard to say: "Well, perhaps we can soon begin," when there was another knock. It was Eichbaum

and Qvam, who shook hands with Miss Helgesen and said: "Well, nobody's invited us, you know, but we thought we'd try and pass ourselves in." Meanwhile Karl went round bowing, with drooping shoulders, in a Parisian frock-coat, the lining of which rustled slightly as he moved.

Miss Helgesen was quite flattered by his ceremonial air:

"Mr. von Eichbaum, this is a very delicate attention," she said, taking his long and rather cold hand; and Karl passed on, bowing, while Josefine, high-bosomed in a frogged bodice, handed round the sauce and the nurses began, rather slowly and solemnly, to help themselves to pudding. But Qvam, looking round at all the tight-laced figures, remarked to Miss Kaas:

"Dash it, this is much too serious."

And he seized the Madeira and began to fill the glasses to make things more cheerful. "Miss Brandt," he said, "you must help me—"

Ida came out of the corner by the bleeding-heart, where all this time Miss Friis had been examining the yellow dress with a professional air, and took up the tray of glasses.

"Is this from you?" said Karl in an unusually low voice, as he took a glass.

He stood with it in his hand:

"You look so well," he said in the same voice, which sounded quite strange to her.

She did not look up as she replied—saying something about his flower.

"One had to do something for one's welcome," said Karl, but it sounded as if he was confiding a secret to her.

Then Kjær came up behind Ida and took her round the waist:

"Doesn't she look lovely?" she said, rocking Ida in her arms.

"Yes, one doesn't recognize you ladies this evening," said Karl.

"No," replied Miss Kjær; "you see, we so seldom get a chance of wearing anything."

Ida passed down the table. The lines of her figure seemed so supple and caressing, as she leaned forward offering the nurses wine.

"What did that dress cost?" asked Boserup, as Ida went past, and the woman sitting next to her laughed. Qvam was telling stories at the end of the table, and the nurses moved their chairs and got up and helped themselves. Ida could hear that Karl was laughing now, sitting by Kjær.

"It was Miss Brandt that made the pudding," Josefine kept saying, as she handed it round.

There was a great cheer when the door opened and Miss Koch appeared. Qvam shouted: "Your health, Miss Koch!" while they all clinked glasses.

"Oh, so there are men here," said Miss Koch, who had put on no other finery than a clean collar.

"Yes, two," said Karl with a bow.

"So I see," said Miss Koch, and there was another laugh.

They began to laugh at nothing, raising their voices and talking past one another, while Miss Boserup held forth about the Club and Miss Kjær and Miss Krohn made themselves nosegays of the flowers on the table.

"Kjær's stealing, Kjær's stealing!" they cried.

"Now we're getting lively," said Ida, as she passed Karl with a radiant face.

Miss Boserup was still on the subject of the Club: of course there was no support from Frederik's Hospital.

But Qvam called out from the end of the table:

"We won't hear about that, we won't hear about that," striking his plate with his spoon.

"We won't hear about that, we won't hear about that," they all cried in chorus.

And suddenly all the spoons clattered against the plates—except Miss Helgesen's and Miss Boserup's—and everybody laughed, while Boserup pushed back her chair, saying: "I didn't know this was a children's party."

"It is," said Qvam, and the spoons rattled again.

"Hush!" said Miss Helgesen.

There were two knocks on the door.

"Hush, the patients can hear us. That was the night watchman."

Suddenly everyone was quiet, with the same expression on all their faces; and they heard the door open and shut, leading to the "violent corridor."

"Pooh," said Qvam; "*they* make enough noise sometimes."

But Miss Kaas was on her feet, taking advantage of the silence, while Miss Helgesen as though automatically had assumed the place of honour among the flowers, and Miss Kaas rapped on her glass.

Karl slipped to Ida's side. They had spoken but little, but he seemed always to be where she was.

"Won't you sit down?" he said.

She sat on the chair and he stood by it.

"Isn't it warm?" was all she said, passing her hand over her forehead.

Miss Kaas, speaking in an undertone, as though the night watchman's knocks were still in their ears, proposed the health of Miss Helgesen, who "was one of those who maintain the prestige of the profession."

"Then we'll burst into a quiet cheer," said Qvam.

He beat time with his hand and whispered nine hurrahs, in which the others joined, in the same whisper, thrusting out their lips and laughing gently.

"That's right," said Qvam; "that's the way we shout hurrah in the Mental Department.

"Now we'll clink glasses," he said, and he led the way, stealing on tiptoe with his glass in his hand, while the others followed in single file, treading softly, to where Helgesen sat.

"Hurrah—rah—rah," said Qvam. "And thanks for the Madeira."

Miss Koch said: "Well, I must be in it,'" and followed behind Ida, with an empty glass. But Miss Boserup sat where she was:

"Excuse me if I clink from my place," she said.

"First and foremost let me thank you," said Miss Helgesen, clinking with Ida.

"Oh," said Ida, as her eyes rested on the flowers and the lights and all of them; "it has been so lovely here this evening."

Josefine, who had been to fetch reinforcements of wine from Ida's room, stood by the door with Miss Kjær:

"What a pretty face she has," she said.

Miss Koch turned round with her empty glass: "Have you got a drop for me?" Josefine ran and filled the matron's glass. "Well, thanks for good fellowship," said Miss Koch to Miss Helgesen.

"This was your place," whispered Karl to Ida.

And Ida sat down as before.

But Miss Koch thought it was quite time for coffee, if they were going to have coffee. Qvam offered her a cigar, and Karl passed round cigarettes, while they all secretly examined his fine silver cigarette-case: "*May* we?" asked Miss Kjær, looking to Miss Helgesen.

But Miss Friis surpassed them all in the art of smoking and could send blue rings down over the white candles before they broke up.

"Look," said Ida, watching the fine smoke-rings.

"Now we must sing," said Miss Krohn.

Miss Helgesen tried to raise objections, but Miss Krohn replied: "Of course we shall only hum—we often do that in our rooms.

"Ida," she said, "you lead off. We'll take 'Fly, bird, fly'—"

The moved their chairs away from the table and half-hummed, half-sang, gazing at the candles:

"Fly, bird, fly over Furesö's waters,
Soon the dark night will be here . . ."

They went on singing, half-aloud, as though the song came from far away, behind a closed door. Miss Kjær rocked gently to and fro, and Miss Helgesen joined in with her contralto. Josefine hummed too, standing at the door as though on guard, with her hands on her hips:

"Fly, bird, fly over Furesö's billows,
Ply thy wings swiftly and well . . ."

The singing stopped, but no one moved.

"They've bought the 'Bakke,' " said Karl.

"Have they?" she half turned to him. There were tears in her eyes.

"Yes."

The singing began again.

"Do they mean to pull down the house?" asked Ida slowly and in a very faint voice.

"Yes," said Karl.

The others went on singing, but Karl murmured, so that Ida could scarcely catch his words:

"We ought to have had it."

Ida sat motionless.

But suddenly Qvam interrupted the song:

"If we're going to have singing it must be in the gloaming." And he began blowing out the candles, Miss Friis helping him laughingly.

"There," said Qvam; "now the big lamps. But we want the stars to shine." And he left Ida's little lamps alight.

"But then we must open the door of the stove," said Miss Kjær. She could not manage it and called Ida to help her. Ida got up and opened the stove door. "Sit here," said Miss Kjær, pulling her down on to a little *pouf*.

"There," said Qvam, "now the lighting is propitious."

They took up the song again, perhaps a little slower than before—with their faces turned to the glowing coals. Ida had closed her eyes:

> "Fly, bird, fly over Furesö's surging,
> Deep breathes the sighing of Night . . ."

The singing ceased. Here and there in the darkness specks of light from cigarettes showed up and Miss Koch's big cigar, like a beacon.

"Don't you know any song about Jutland?" Karl asked, half aloud, from the darkness.

"Oh yes, Ida does," said Miss Krohn.

"Oh yes, do sing one," said Miss Berg. Ida had not answered.

"Sing," whispered Miss Kjær.

Looking up into the dark, in a clear but very low

voice, as though she only half opened her lips, Ida sang the song to Jutland:

"Jutland stands above the ocean
Like a mighty runic stone,
Whose old runes are graves of warriors,
Where the forest now has grown.
And upon the heath all bare
Fairy lanterns haunt the air."

She scarcely made a break after the first verse, but went on singing. Miss Kjær was leaning her head against her shoulder:

"Jutland, thou'rt the heart of Denmark,
Set between the rival seas,
Wind-swept dunes and wooded highlands,
Lonely ridges clad in trees.
Baltic wave and Western sand
Meet on Skagen's breezy strand."

"I say, that's pretty," said Qvam when Ida had finished; but Karl said nothing, he was only looking at her face.

"Come on, Eichbaum," said Qvam; "now, by the Lord, we'll have a dance."

There were cries and laughter, half-suppressed, in the darkness. "But are you crazy, Doctor?" said Miss Helgesen, who loved dancing.

Meanwhile Qvam had struck a wax match. "Take care of all the things!" cried Miss Kjær, who had got up as though she would try to hold them. And in a second the table was moved to one side and the chairs were out of the way.

Miss Kjær and Miss Krohn sang, still *sotto voce*, by

the stove, while Qvam swang Miss Helgesen round so that their feet could be heard in the darkness:

" 'Pretty maiden with the jet-black hair,
Look at me, do!
Feel how my heart beats madly, while I swear
That I love you.'
'No, sir hunter, no, pray you let me go;
If mamma should see, how angry she would be—'
Papperla, papperla, papperla, papperlo,
You don't say so?"

"Shall we?" said Karl with a bow. He took Miss Friis.

Ida joined in the singing. Her voice seemed to lead the others, with a more joyful note, though she was not aware of it.

"That's good," said Qvam, as he and Miss Helgesen swung past in the dim light like a pair of shadows. Now Karl glided past, holding himself so well, with Miss Friis.

"Let us," said Miss Kaas to Miss Boserup, and they began to dance, Miss Boserup acting as man.

" 'Pretty maiden with the lily-white hue,
Don't play with me.
Give me your hand and now your answer true,
What shall it be?'
'Will you promise me, oh, so faithfully,
To be true alway, till your dying day?'—
Papperla, papperla, papperla, papperlee,
You don't catch me!"

Qvam nudged Josefine, who had come a little forward to watch the matrons twirling round.

"It's lovely," said Miss Helgesen, as they stopped dancing.

Nobody was singing now except Miss Kjær, and Miss Friis, when Eichbaum released her.

"Come," said Karl, and Ida followed him.

They did not speak as they danced slowly in the darkness. Miss Kjær, still sitting on the *pouf*, sang more softly. The wicks of the little lamps blazed up one by one and went out.

"They've stopped singing," whispered Ida.

There was silence for a few moments, as though they were all tired, and here and there the gleams of the cigarettes had gone out.

"Now we'd better have some light to see each other by," said Miss Koch, lighting the candles again. The nurses blinked their eyes at the light, looking as if they were just awake.

"Now then," said Qvam, "shall we drink a glass with Miss Brandt? Hang it all, she's the one who made the pudding."

He clinked with Ida, and Miss Kjær ran up, while they all reached for their glasses.

"Yes, she deserves it," said Miss Kjær.

Josefine, who was collecting the plates on the table, gave Ida a dig in the back; she too wanted to clink with her, on the sly:

"Now that's the first glass I've drunk," she said, and there were tears in her eyes.

Karl came up to Ida and touched her glass with his:

"Thanks," he said.

Soon after they broke up, but Ida offered to stay and help Miss Helgesen to put things straight. She said good-bye to Qvam, who was already at the door, and to Karl.

"Good-night," she said, taking his hand.

"Good-evening," said Karl, still in the same tone.

Ida stayed behind with Miss Helgesen. They put the flowers in water and cleared the table. Ida let down the sofa and made Miss Helgesen's bed. Then she left.

There was silence in the "violent corridor" and Miss Petersen was on duty. Ida went slowly upstairs with her candle.

"It's me," said Karl's voice suddenly from the dark stairs above.

Ida did not start, nor did she reply; her face merely paled a little in the light of the candle, as she opened her door and closed it behind them.

"You don't mind my coming?" whispered Karl.

Ida smiled up in his face.

"No," she said.

IT WAS GETTING ON for morning.

Karl sat on the edge of Ida's bed.

"Ida," he said; "are you angry with me?"

Ida lay with her eyes closed.

"Why?" was all she said.

And after a moment she opened her eyes and said:

"I knew it would be."

Karl still sat on the bed—and perhaps he actually believed he was in love, that for the first time in his life he was in love.

"Good-night, Puss," he whispered.

Ida slowly passed her hand over her forehead:

"Kiss me *there*," she said.

She lay back again and closed her eyes:

"Thank you. And will you promise me one thing?" —she opened her eyes, but shut them again, as though the sight of him caused her a sudden pang—"to tell me, when you mean to leave me."

Karl made no answer. But for all that Ida took his hand and laid it against her cheek as though in a boundless caress.

"Thank you," she said again.

THE SNOW crunched beneath Karl's feet.

"And what the devil is there to prevent our getting married?" he kept saying to himself.

Part Three

THE REAL FROST had come.

The mornings were clear and bright, with snow on the roads and snow far out over the frozen Lakes. Ida walked erect and briskly along the foot-path, while the riders came by in twos and threes on their streaming horses.

"Hullo!" said Ida to a boy who had fallen on a slide.

"Hullo!" he called back, picking himself up and flying on.

Two old gentlemen had been watching him.

"Up again," said one of them, laughing to Ida; "what a thing it is to be young."

All the old morning habitués had something to say to Ida, if it was only a word in passing; and Ida nodded:

"Yes, Judge"; she knew them all, all these old gentlemen.

The two old men walked on, and one of them—he wore flaps over his ears—pronounced slowly and distinctly:

"It's a grand thing, you know, to look at a healthy face."

The other paused a moment and watched Ida—there was a kind of buoyancy about her, in the movement of her hips:

"Yes, young people look well in the sunshine."

Over by the workmen's dwellings Boserup and Kaas came striding towards Ida in their big galoshes.

"You're rather late in coming out," said Miss Kaas as she went by.

"Yes," replied Ida without stopping; "I prefer to take my walk when the sun shines."

"But what a lovely morning," she added, already a few paces from them.

"Yes, fourteen degrees of frost," shouted Kaas, who was in black woollen gloves.

"Oh, the cold warms one," Ida shouted back.

"Not to mention the fur coat," remarked Boserup, who had not slackened her pace and was already six or seven trees on. She said something to the effect that people ought to dress more in accordance with their position.

"Yes," agreed Kaas, whose mind was running on Ida (it seemed as though Ida had very little to say to the other nurses of late, and that offended them); "she's grown very high and mighty lately."

Ida turned on reaching the end of the Lake and raised her veil: yes, now the coast was clear; and she came back, with the sun behind her, and slipped round the corner by the Café Rörholm. The toothless old waiter opened the door of a private room, as though he was expecting her.

"There's a nice fire," he said.

"Thanks— You'll bring us the usual, won't you?" Ida took her coat off and opened the door of the stove, in which the coals were blazing.

The toothless one nodded and closed the door, noiselessly letting down the flap (there was something in Waiter Ellingsen's way of performing his duties that reminded one of a verger in church opening the pews of the regular members of the congregation), before going to order the breakfast.

Ida laid the table herself, with a bunch of violets in Karl's place, and took the cake out of its paper wrap-

per; lovely and fresh it was. There was the knock of a stick on the door:

"Good-morning," said Karl; "bless my soul, you always have something with you—"

"Good-morning."

He kissed her cheek and hung up his overcoat.

"It's warm here," said Ida, brushing her cheek against his and looking up at him intently. She would have liked so much to stay like this for a moment, looking into his eyes.

"Yes, by Jove, it's lovely," said Karl, as he took his seat and proceeded to devour the food, while the fire toasted his legs.

Ida laughed as she watched him:

"Now you're enjoying yourself," she said.

"Yes," said Karl, dipping a piece of toast into his egg and looking across the table at her; "this is the best meal of the day."

Ida cut the cake—she was always on the move when she was as happy as this:

"You know where this comes from," she said, with a little cast of the head that she had caught from Olivia.

"My word, yes"—Karl took a piece; "you do manage to get about," he said in a rather indulgent tone.

"Yes," Ida laughed and nodded. She had a way of opening her eyes wide and round when she was pleased.

Karl went on eating, slowly, helping himself again and again, with his jockey's legs stretched out in front of the fire. But Ida pushed away her cup and plate to make room for a story:

"Now listen to this—it's incredible—"

It was a long story, about a bottle of "grog"—

"Oh, that's it," said Karl; "yes, I know you're given to nipping over in your department."

"I'm not though," said Ida, taking his hand across the table.

"No, you don't want it—you can't have it all ways."

"Karl—!"

But the "grog" was a bottle of Benedictine, and Miss Friis had just put it away in the cupboard, bang in front of everybody—"that was incredible too—when the Boss came along, just as Petersen was standing there—by the open cupboard—and he saw it—straight away. Oh, what a row he made; you ought to have been there—"

Karl had finished eating and sat blowing great rings from his cigarette.

"And now I don't suppose Friis will get promoted," Ida concluded, with a scared look.

"That's a pity," said Karl. "But Friis is one of those who can look after themselves, isn't she?"

"But, you see," and Ida gave two nods; "she only gets twenty-five crowns a month."

She had got up and stood behind Karl, rubbing her chin over his hair, while Karl sat gently purring:

"The Boss ought to be given a job in Rome," he said.

Ida took both his cheeks in her hands:

"Why?"

"Why, because the fellows who dance round the Pope have faces just like his."

Ida laughed, as she lay down on the floor with her elbow resting against his knee. They were silent for a while, till Karl said:

"I say, my mother's going abroad—it's settled."

"Abroad? Where to?" Ida gave a little start.

"To Geneva." He smacked his lips: "Grandma Aline has got to be driven home—"

"Mrs. Feddersen? And your mother is going to fetch

her—" Ida looked up and then dropped her eyes again —"how awfully nice of her."

All at once a slight quiver came into Ida's voice, and Karl nodded thoughtfully, still looking into the fire:

"Yes, that's how she is."

The coals in the stove settled:

"It shows she doesn't judge her" (Ida's voice was low, with a curious stress on "judge," as though it was something she had learnt by heart)—"so severely."

Karl's eyes were still on the coals:

"I'm blest if I know—I expect she judges her just like the rest—only she's going to fetch her."

Ida did not move; one would almost have thought she had tears in her eyes.

Karl nodded again at the fire:

"And I'll bet she'll get her reinstated in her old position," he said.

Ida made no reply; she had taken her hands from his knee.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked.

"Your mother."

She spoke with feeling, and laid her head against his side, while Karl passed his hand over her hair and the coals continued to settle, one by one.

"You're such a comfort when you don't say anything," he said, still passing his hand over her hair—quite gently, but there was always something in his caresses that was like fondling a dog.

"Just when I wanted to say so much for once."

"What did you want to say?" he asked, without taking his hand from her hair.

There was a moment's pause:

"Thanks," she whispered very low.

There was a twitch at the corner of his mouth, and his hand went to the back of her neck:

"And I'm never allowed to thank *you*."

"Yes," she said—and the fire seemed to disappear—"if you would thank me sometimes—for yourself."

Karl bent down over her; there came a look in his eyes which made them like velvet.

"Dear Puss," he said.

Ida did not return his caresses, nor did she look up, as she said—he could scarcely hear it:

"For I'm always thinking of your mother—what she would think."

A second passed.

"It's not worth the trouble, my dear," said Karl, changing his tone.

But Ida had got up and fetched his coat (she dried her eyes hastily while turning her back) and spread it out with the lining towards the fire, passing her hands over the smooth silk. She was so fond of that overcoat:

"The lining wears well."

"Yes."

"Hm," Ida smiled; "how glad you were when you got it."

Karl stood up and shook his long legs.

"It was time too," he said, slipping into the coat, as Ida helped him; "to get something to keep one warm on these morning walks."

Ida then put her things on: "Good-bye," she said with her arms round his neck, before ringing for Ellingsen. Mr. Ellingsen had his own way of entering a door, like slipping through a crack. The purse was already lying by Karl's plate (it was a man's Russia leather purse Ida had bought) and Karl paid the bill, while Ida turned up her fur collar. As Mr. Ellingsen went out to get change for the big note, Ida snatched up the purse again.

"Good-bye, Puss," said Karl again, swinging her to and fro with his hands on her waist, while Ida smiled:

"Good-bye."

She paused for a moment:

"Do you know, I always feel so happy when I'm going."

"O-oh," laughed Karl, letting her go.

"Yes," said Ida, standing close against his shoulder; "because then I know it's all true. Good-bye."

The door of the room closed. Ida always went out first, and Karl waited till she had gone a little way. Mr. Ellingsen brought the change, which Eichbaum put in his pocket, and the toothless one began to clear the table, with his head on one side: there was a lunch for two ordered at a quarter to eleven.

"You're busy, by Jove," said Karl, still waiting.

"Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Ellingsen; "we get a good deal of custom now in the forenoon—in business hours."

"Good-morning."

Ida passed many groups of promenaders under the trees; she knew that now Karl had turned the corner and was following her on the footpath—lounging comfortably along with his stick under his arm and Ida's back in front of him, at a decent distance: Jove, that was the best cigar of the whole day, he said to himself every morning.

Some riders came by and some ladies passed him: the scent of his Havana was positively glorious in the still air.

A couple of lieutenants rode up alongside Karl and pulled up their horses with a "'Morning."

"'Morning," drawled Karl.

"Hanged if you don't look like a man that's come into a property," said one of them, Knuth.

"Well, one has this and that to consider," replied Karl.

The officers laughed. They stayed discussing the points of their animals till there was a sound of approaching hoofs, and the two men in uniform saluted. It was Kate and her groom, and she too pulled up:

"Good-morning—so your mother's off tomorrow?" she asked Karl.

"That's the decision," replied Karl, eyeing her mount critically.

"*Bon voyage*," said Kate, flicking her whip.

The two officers muttered an enquiry whether they might join her, and Kate said: "Of course you can" (Knuth had been in garrison at Aarhus); and the three rode away slowly, Kate between the two men.

"So that's what you were waiting for," said Karl, following them with his eyes; now Kate was greeting Ida with a nod.

"But my word, she rides well," he thought to himself. He gave a whistle through his teeth, a remarkable signal of his that could be heard half a mile away—and Ida slackened her pace till he caught her up: he somehow seemed drawn to speak to her. But all he said was:

"My word, she rides well." And he kept his eyes on her twenty-year-old figure, *there*, on the horse's back.

"She's so pretty," said Ida, and her eyes beamed at Karl's.

Now the horses were turning the corner; Karl was still watching the pliant figures of the officers:

"Now I suppose the butter profits will go to the Hussars," he said.

They had reached the slide, where the boy had come a cropper, and all at once—perhaps it was because she was so glad Karl had called to her—Ida began to

slide. She straddled rather awkwardly, like a child, laughing all the time.

"You wouldn't look very graceful on skates," said Karl, and Ida smiled in reply.

Then they parted at the corner.

Karl walked on, thinking that after all he might just as well ride with Kate in the morning, he wouldn't be any later at the office—

"And it's a lovely animal," he said to himself.

When he came into the office Miss Koch was there. She had taken off her spectacles—she had just met Ida in the middle gateway—and now she was watching for von Eichbaum.

Karl got out his books and screwed up his office stool.

"So that's it, the cavalry has its eye on the butter," he thought. And he turned to his books.—

Ida did not fall asleep; she lay in the dim green light, thinking of Mrs. von Eichbaum and her journey —how nice it was of her. She did not judge her, she went to fetch her.

Ida lay still, gazing into the pale green light. Her thoughts carried her so far.

Down below the doors opened and shut.

Ida would send some flowers to Mrs. von Eichbaum before she left. Yes, she would send a bouquet to the station.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister were sitting in the dining-room before the locked trunk, when Mrs. Mourier arrived with Kate.

"But, Emilie," said Mrs. Mourier, "are you going to travel in silk?"

"Heavens, Vilhelmine, I always do. It's the only practical thing. One can shake the dust out of silk."

Mrs. Gersdorff took up the cue, while Mrs. von Eichbaum summoned Julius, and said:

"No, fancy travelling in cloth, with our hatred of dirt!"

Kate, who had a big portfolio under her arm and was pursing her lips as though she wanted to whistle but kept it to herself, asked if they would like to see the designs for the new house at Ludvigsbakke.

"Kate dear, looking at drawings now—" it was Mrs. von Eichbaum who spoke; "the very minute one has to start—"

"But you've got an hour yet," said Kate.

Mrs. von Eichbaum always left home exactly half an hour before the time, "as though one could tell what may happen at the last moment."

They all got into the cab and drove off, with Julius on the box. Mrs. Mourier announced that probably she would be going away herself in a few days—to Aarhus. Mourier wrote that they *must* give those two dinners.

"It doesn't matter about the real people," said Mrs. Mourier; "but it's the farmers and stewards that Mourier thinks we shall have to ask as usual. And one is always so dependent, in these days of competition."

"I think Mourier is quite right there," said Mrs. von Eichbaum. "It's always inadvisable to offend that class of people."

"Yes, that's just what Mourier says," replied Mrs. Mourier.

When they came into the waiting-room at the station, Mrs. Schleppegrell was already there with Fanny, who was in a bonnet with wine-coloured ribbons tied under her pointed chin. Mrs. Schleppegrell embraced Mrs. von Eichbaum, saying: "Oh, my dear, thank God you are going, and how grateful Line ought to be to you—"

"My dear Anna," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum; "it is really not worth talking of a couple of days and nights on a modern railway."

They all sat down at one of the round tables, and Mrs. von Eichbaum put on a pair of washing gloves for the journey, while Fanny gave a message from Miss Juul, the Maid of Honour.

"Yes," said Mrs. Schleppegrell; "Emma" (that was the name of the Maid of Honour) "said to me only yesterday: 'Dear friend, it will be such a relief for our whole circle.' "

But Mrs. Mourier had tears in her eyes, as she said:

"How painful it will be though for Aline to see you after what has happened, Emilie."

The waiting-room was beginning to fill up, as Kate peeled herself an orange and the others discussed Geneva chocolate. "Oh, Emilie," said Mrs. Schleppegrell; "if it isn't too much trouble, would you order me twenty pounds—to be sent direct. You know, Geneva chocolate is the best for Fanny."

Karl appeared among the crowd of passengers, with his stick under his arm and his drooping shoulders. "Well," he said, "of course you've been waiting here an hour."

He kissed his mother on the cheek and gave her a little travelling flask of eau de Cologne, covered in Russian leather: "With my love," he said. Karl made his money go a remarkably long way lately, and he was really so attentive by nature. He shook hands with all the rest, and Mrs. Mourier said with a smile:

"That's an attentive son. He'll make a good husband."

"Are you sure of that?" said Karl, coming over to Mrs. Mourier and Kate and twitching his nose.

"Hm, what are the points of a good husband?" asked Kate.

"He's got to be a real man," replied Karl.

Kate looked up, and for an instant there was something in her eyes that drew Karl a little nearer to the back of her chair.

"Yes, Karl's quite right there," said Mrs. Mourier.

The doors of the waiting-room were opened, and Julius collected the hand baggage.

"But in Geneva," Mrs. von Eichbaum was heard saying to Mrs. Schleppegrell, "one can always go to the Reformed Church, you know."

Fanny, who was observing Karl and Kate through her *lorgnette*, remarked to Mrs. Gersdorff: "Yes, they have a new clergyman; he is said to be a charming preacher."

Mrs. Mourier, who was the last to leave her seat, observed "Well, I never care to listen to the expoundings of foreigners."

The whole party came out on to the platform and Mrs. von Eichbaum got a compartment to herself. There was something about Mrs. von Eichbaum which made conductors and such persons hasten to oblige her, although she had not exactly the look of being good for a tip. She got in and all the rest, except Karl and Kate, clustered round the door, so that Miss Kjær, who came running up, quite out of breath, with Ida's bouquet, could scarcely reach the step.

"These are a few flowers from Miss Brandt—unfortunately she could not come herself."

Mrs. von Eichbaum took the flowers and thanked her: it was so nice of Miss Brandt. And Miss Kjær disappeared again as suddenly and as bashfully as she had come, while Mrs. von Eichbaum, sitting on her seat with the bouquet in her hand, said to the others:

"My dears, it is really very friendly of her—but flowers on a journey are among the most useless things I know of. Do take them home with you, Vilhelmine, where they can be put in water."

She handed Mrs. Mourier the roses:

"Here one can only put them in the net and find them withered in the morning."

The bouquet was passed on to Kate, who remarked: "They're pretty," and regarded the fine blooms of "La France" with supreme indifference.

"Yes," said Karl, and a kind smile came over his face; "it was well meant, you know."

Then he resumed the thread—they had been talking about Knuth's horsemanship—and he twitched his nose as he spoke of the Count:

"No, he's one of the excitable sort. Where did you pick *him* up?"

"He was quartered at Aarhus. And you won't ride with me."

"It's a lovely animal," was all Karl said, nodding to himself.

The conductor shut the doors, and the late-comers dashed out of the waiting-room, followed by breathless hotel porters. Doors were opened again and shut, and they all started abusing one another, porters, conductors and passengers.

"My dear," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, standing behind the door of her compartment, straight as a candle; "isn't it extraordinary that people can never arrange to come in time?"

The train glided away, and they had a last glimpse of Mrs. von Eichbaum's white handkerchief, before they all turned to leave.

As they passed through the booking hall Karl said:

"I could quite well ride tomorrow, by the way."

"But now Knuth's coming," replied Kate.

"Well, let him ride with us," said Karl.

It was arranged; and Karl went off.

Mrs. Schleppegrell and Fanny were going home by tram, and the others took a cab. Their talk was of Aline, Mrs. Gersdorff saying:

"We must not judge her, of course. But, my dear, there *are* things that are past one's comprehension."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Mourier with a thoughtful look; "I expect we've all got it in us, and if we don't feel tied to the one we've got—"

"But, dear me," replied Mrs. Gersdorff, "there *are* things we repress—"

Kate sat watching the Schleppegrells. Now they had got on board the tram. Mrs. Schleppegrell always made the conductor get a really good grip of her.

"Fanny," she said, when they were both safely inside; "I don't think there's any need to mention that we were at the station."

Mrs. Mourier had reached home and dropped into a seat with all her outdoor things on. Her thoughts were of Aline.

"Well, well," she said; "the worst is yet to come." She was thinking of the home-coming.

"Kate, you might put those flowers in water—"

Kate looked about the room.

"I must have left them in the cab," she said, going in to Viktoria.

Mrs. Mourier sat where she was with her things on. A smile came over her face: she was thinking of Karl. She had a great liking for him; there was no affectation about him, she always said to Mrs. Gersdorff.

Ida was sitting in the café before the fire, by the side of the ready-laid table, when the door opened and she

stood up—her blush flew over her face and neck—but it was only Mr. Ellingsen bringing a note.

Ida opened and read it in an instant, still standing in the middle of the room, and a strange pang shot through her breast.

"I can't in decency get out of riding with the Butter this morning. We shall meet. Karl."

"Is the gentleman ill?" asked Ellingsen, very discreetly. He had only once glanced up at her face.

"Yes," said Ida, almost without knowing it.

Her eyes went to the table, for an instant only:

"Will you give me the bill then?" she said, smiling all at once (the whole thing was so natural; of course it was Mrs. von Eichbaum who had made the arrangement, the evening before, at the station); but suddenly it occurred to her that Ellingsen would recognize the purse, and she said:

"Oh, no, we can leave it till another time;" and she went on talking to Ellingsen as he helped her on with her coat, till she said "Good-bye" without looking round.

Ellingsen closed the flap of the door and cleared away, smoothing out the napkins. There was something in the motions of his hands, a certain note of concern, as though he were dealing out black-bordered hymns in a pew.

Ida walked rapidly, erect and smiling again: of course it was quite natural, and Karl (as she thought his name the smile reached her eyes, which had been so round and stiff, though there was brightness enough in them) Karl was so fond of riding— She was still smiling: yes, he looked so well on horseback—

But—she would get home as quickly as she could—for if they rode this way—she didn't, no, she didn't want to meet them after all—

But, whatever may have been the reason, her pace grew slower every moment, and the heads of the old gentlemen appeared quite suddenly, close to her, before she had time to nod. The old Judge stopped her and held both her hands fast in his knitted gloves. It was such glorious weather, with this clear, bright air, he said:

"Yes, it's a grand air for us who are hard of hearing," he said. But at that moment Ida heard horses' hoofs behind her and she felt she *must* get away from him; it was certainly they, but it sounded as though there were three horses—

Ida did not know why she drew such a long breath when she half turned and saw Knuth trotting up on the other side of Kate.

The horses came nearer and nearer, and Ida was just going to bow, when Kate Mourier pulled up.

"Good-morning, Miss Brandt," she said from the saddle, and the others stopped too.

Ida turned red and then pale:

"Good-morning," she said, and suddenly the stiff look came back into her eyes.

"You bet we've had a gallop," said Kate, while Karl, who had pulled up close to Ida without being able to catch her eye, managed, as though casually, to stroke her cheek lightly with the very end of his riding-whip, making Ida look up for a fraction of a second—

"Ugh," said Kate, who had been looking out over the Lake (Knuth did not take his eyes off Ida); "in weather like this it must be horrid in the madhouse."

She nodded again and rode on.

"She's really not at all bad," she said, as they trotted along.

"No," said Karl slowly; "she's so pretty when she's in trouble."

Kate laughed: "Heavens, how like you! Isn't she pretty when she's happy?"

"Oh no," said Karl.

"And why?"

Karl paused before answering: "I suppose she's not used to it," he said with a nod.

Knuth had dropped half a length behind the others; he turned twice in the saddle to look back.

"Well, Knuth," Kate called, and Knuth rode up. A moment later he asked:

"Is she at the Municipal?"

"Yes," said Karl.

"*Allez-y.*"

They broke into a sharp trot.

After drill in the barrack square that morning Knuth wandered about in a strange way, chewing the handle of his whip.

His bandy-legged friend Brahe watched him with a grin: he knew what was the matter when Knuth ate his whip and seemed to grow darker about the eyes.

"Rot!" said Knuth. But he still chewed his whip: Gad, she'd smiled so charmingly, when she looked at that loafer.

Ida had come home. She had nodded to the porter and spoken to Josefine on the stairs—there was something tempestuous about Josefine's skirts these days—and on reaching her room she had shut the window: she felt only one thing, over and over again—the delicate touch of Karl's whip grazing her cheek—

"Damn it!—oh he can't have seen me." Karl darted round the corner of the stairs to Ida's room just as Dr. Qvam opened the door on the first floor. On reaching her door he paused for a moment, till he heard

Dr. Qvam's footsteps die away in the passage below.

Then he gave his double knock, as usual.

"You were so pretty this morning," he kept saying to Ida; and he stayed with her up to the last minute.

But when he came down, Qvam was standing outside the "violent corridor," talking to Miss Koch.

"Good-evening," he said in a rather low voice, as he slipped by.

Miss Koch had not replied, but she followed him with a sharp look, and her conversation with Qvam came to a standstill.

"One can't help asking," she said suddenly, in the middle of something else; "what people like that are *thinking* of—"

Dr. Qvam considered for a moment:

"I suppose they're the kind who never think very far," he said; "and for them the easiest thing is not to think farther than they want to."

Miss Koch closed her lips tightly, till they were no more than a stroke.

Presently she said:

"Tell me, Doctor, what do you really think ought to be done with the world?"

Qvam whistled:

"Dashed if I know; unless we were to treat a certain proportion of the male population as they treat stallions and make carthorses of them, to go quietly in the shafts.

"And in that way," he added after a pause, "we should attain another praiseworthy result—depopulating the world to the best of our ability."

"You are a sensible man, Doctor," said Miss Koch.

"God knows," replied Qvam. "I suppose it makes one bitter to live in a madhouse, and still more so to think of those who aren't shut up—"

THE CAB STOPPED at the gate of the Eichbaum mansion, and Karl got out:

"There, now the shawl well over your ears—"

Ida was to enact Mrs. Gersdorff for the benefit of Porter Svendsen, and she went on tiptoe to make herself tall enough, laughing, with the lace shawl hiding her face.

"He's there, by gad," said Karl, glancing sideways at the porter's lodge, while Ida walked on, stretching herself on her toes.

"There."

They were safely in the courtyard and both began to laugh, softly. But Karl said with a nod:

"Let me tell you though, it was because of him the Admiral wouldn't live here any longer."

"Why?"

Karl smacked his lips: "Schleppy's a gay old dog," was all he said.

They stole up the stairs, and Ida stumbled and laughed again before they reached the door.

"Why, you're trembling," said Karl as he helped her off with her things.

"Yes," said Ida with a laugh; still she was shaking. But Karl, opening the door of the dining-room, said simply: "They've gone to bed, bless you," as though that was what made her tremble. But Ida waited in Karl's room till he came back.

"They're all asleep," he said, leading Ida, who still walked very gingerly, into the drawing-room, where the little lamps were burning and the wine stood on the table.

"How grand you are here," said Ida, leaning her head against his shoulder.

"Yes," said Karl; "this evening you're the daughter-in-law."

For an instant Ida turned a pair of radiant eyes upon him, with a sudden blush; and Karl, meeting her eyes, drew his shoulder away (perhaps he did not know it himself), almost imperceptibly; and yet she felt it.

"This is the Navy Madeira," said Karl.

They drank a glass, and then Karl stretched himself in the big armchair, with his legs out, and Ida brought him a footstool, and they heard nothing but the hum of the gas:

"This is jolly," said Karl.

"Yes."

Ida lay on the floor with her head against his leg, and her voice still trembled a little; but all at once she brightened, simply at the feel of his fingers on her neck—and she looked about her and pointed to the lace-making cushion, laughing without knowing why:

"She hasn't taken that with her," she said.

"No," said Karl, lifting her up; but Ida shook herself free and took the cover off the cushion and began to manipulate the pins. "Mind what you're doing," said Karl, bending down and blowing into her hair, when she took her hands from the cushion and said, with closed eyes, so softly that it could just be heard and no more:

"Tonight we're going to be married."

Karl glanced up into her eyes, which were now open, with a look that was different from hers—and he gave the same imperceptible little start as before:

"It won't be the first time, will it, Puss?" he said, rather louder than she had spoken—and her chin was raised from his hair.

"But we're not drinking anything," said Karl. There had been a moment's silence and he handed up her glass over his head—she took it but did not touch it.

"By Jove, there are the drawings—" Karl's eye

suddenly lighted on the parcel on the marble table in the corner.

"What drawings?" asked Ida, scarcely knowing what she said.

"The plans for Ludvigsbakke," said Karl, getting up; "we'll have a look at them, by gad."

"No, where did they come from?"

Ida was just as keen as he.

"It's Kate, she leaves them lying about here," said Karl, taking up the parcel and pushing the lace cushion out of the way.

"What a lot there are," said Ida. There was sheet within sheet.

They unrolled the plans and kept them down with their elbows, sitting side by side on the sofa.

"This is the house itself," said Karl; "oh, it's going to be big."

"Ah, it's to have towers," said Ida.

"Yes," said Karl, giving her a pat; "you're mad about towers."

It was in the Italian style with towers and flat roofs. Ida propped the plan up against the lamp: "But it'll be lovely," she said.

Karl sniffed: "Yes, it'll suit the surroundings so well," he said, twitching his nose. He waved his hand over the plan, while Ida was still intent on the façade.

"Look," she said; "from that tower one could see the whole of Bræstrup."

"Bless you, they want to see as far as Horsens," said Karl. He looked at the plan again and nodded: "And they haven't any terraces. But that's just it—people like that always give themselves away; you can see there isn't money enough after all to do the whole thing properly."

They passed to the next drawing. It was the plan

of the first floor. Ida drew her finger along from room to room, and Karl checked off the letters at the bottom of the plan: that was the drawing-room—two drawing-rooms—and that was the tea-room—

"And all that's the dining-room," said Ida.

"Thirty-six feet in length," said Karl, nodding as though in approval.

And there was the billiard-room—in the tower.

"Blest if I didn't think so," said Karl; "there'll be a grand view from there after dinner."

He was beginning to get interested, following the references and measuring the rooms, spanning them with his fingers and nodding: there were open partitions—plate-glass all along—

"Ah, she's pinched these designs abroad," he said.

Ida had let go of the plan; never had she seen such a house.

"What a lot of room they will have," she said, scanning all the different apartments; "but we shouldn't know the place again."

Karl was still studying and measuring:

"Yes, the interior's good" (he clicked his tongue), "my word, it is good."

"Yes," and she laid her head on his shoulder, a little shyly; "they have the money, haven't they?—"

Karl nodded and looked up at the lamp:

"Yes," he said.

He kept his eyes on the lamp for a moment or two:

"We were the ones who ought to have had it," he said at last.

Ida gave a sudden smile:

"Yes," and she too turned her eyes to the lamp.

"For that was what one was born to," added Karl.

"Yes, you—"

"You too," said Karl, dropping his voice a little.

He picked up the next plan. There were all the bedrooms and dressing-rooms, with baths and cupboards. The whole alphabet from A to Z was exhausted in the references. Karl sniffed and he rubbed his hands.

"The devil!" he said; "it's pretty clear she's thinking of getting married—

"And six spare rooms—"

He counted them up:

"Each with its own bath-room."

It amused him, almost as if Kate had been his pupil and had taken lessons in comfort from him:

"It's English," he said; "that's good;" and he scratched his head: "She's a devil; I'll swear she's cribbed the designs from somewhere—"

Ida still sat with her head on his shoulder, watching his finger and looking up into his face: all these rooms seemed to confuse her, there were so many.

"Yes, they'll have a lovely place," she said.

"Jove, I should think they would," and he gave a little jerk in his excitement: here was the next plan, the stables. "Neat," he said; "damned neat. She's a devil."

The stables were also English, he explained, with loose boxes as in a hunting stable in England.

Ida admired in silence—she knew nothing about stables—and, looking at the plan, she said suddenly:

"What a good thing it is Father is not here to see it."

Karl laughed, bending over the drawing.

"Yes," he said; "this wouldn't appeal to the old man—"

And he laughed again at the idea of old Brandt in Kate's English stables.

Ida rose to her feet, and all at once she said—without knowing how it occurred to her; a minute before she had had no idea of it:

"I say, I'm going to take a flat."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to take a flat—"

She told him she had been thinking for a long while that she would rather have a flat—

"Where?" was all Karl asked.

And instantly Ida knew where it was to be: in Ole Suhr Street, close handy; and she knew what she wanted—four rooms; that had always been her idea, a flat like the Kristensens'.

She stood on the other side of the table, bending forward under the lamp, so that the shadow of her head fell across the plan of the stables.

"And the furniture's no use to anybody, stored at Horsens."

She was so keen on the idea that the colour came into her cheeks.

"Yes, that'll be fine," said Karl; he still held the drawing before him. Ida went over to him and took his head in her hands.

"Then you can always have breakfast at home," she said.

Her voice had the note in it that he loved.

"I say, Puss," he said, looking up into her face; "how long can you stay?"

Ida merely smiled and closed her eyes.

Karl rolled up the plans, while Ida went over to the corner sofa, where the stereoscope had stood when she came here for the first time.

"And then we'll furnish the big room as a smoking-room," she said.

Karl sat on the sofa, with his head against the wall.

"No," he said; "we'll sleep in the big room." They were silent for a few moments, while the gas hummed and Karl kept his eyes on Ida, who was sitting just

under the light; till suddenly he said, under his breath:

"It must be vile, having to sit up all night—"

And Ida shook her head and answered in the same tone:

"No, not now—"

She paused a moment:

"Because one can go over it all again in one's mind," she said.

They were silent again, only for a moment, and then Karl went over to her. He could not think of any pet names, but just sat stroking her hands, quite affectionately (and in his heart of hearts he thought: It's going to be hard when the time comes), and at last he kissed her cheek.

"Are you going in now?" he whispered.

She got up and he heard the door of his room softly opened and shut.

"Have you put out the light?" he said, when he joined her.

"Yes," she whispered.

And the hands she gave him were cold and trembling.

"Are you afraid, Puss?"

"I'll go soon," she said, and still she was cold and nervous.

It was well on towards morning when she left.

Karl was out of humour.

"You need only see me into a cab," said Ida.

That was all he did, and when Ida got in she bent her head and kissed his hand, as it lay on the door of the cab.

"I *was* rather afraid," she whispered.

"All right, Puss," said Karl, as though to console her. For it looked as if the tears might flow.

Karl strolled back.

Soon after he stretched himself out in his French

bed, finishing his cigarette and looking up at the ceiling with a preoccupied air:

"But it won't do to put any ideas into her head," he said, nodding at his pillow.—

Ida came home and passed through the gate. There were a good many tips for all the porters these times. On reaching her room she lay down on her bed.

Yes—now she would see about the flat—and then she would never go to his house again— No, she would never go *there* again.

Day broke with rain and sleet. The Doctors came in, shivering in their long white coats, and the Professor's fingers were dead to the knuckles, as he rubbed his hands and looked at the patients.

Now daylight ought to have come, but there was no sign of it.

The porter turned out the working patients and drove them to the door with exclamations, like a herdsman. The keys jangled as the doors were locked.

"Why am I not to go with them?" asked Bertelsen, probably for the tenth time, raising his stealthy eyes, as he held his hands under the tap.

"Because your mother's coming," replied Ida. "There, you're quite clean, Bertelsen, you're quite clean."

Bertelsen regarded his hands with their bitten nails and then, with stooping shoulders, went in and sat down by the stove, listlessly and with eyes half shut. Presently he asked again, as Ida came past:

"Why wasn't I to go with them?"

And Ida repeated:

"I told you, Bertelsen, because your mother's coming—"

And as Ida went about her work she heard nothing

but the groans of two patients in the Men's Ward and the footsteps of the inmate of "A."

The keys rattled in the Women's door. It was Qvam coming back.

"You're slack here," he said.

"Yes," said Ida; she felt as if she neither could nor dared wake up properly.

"I think I'd rather they made a bit of a noise," said Qvam; "when they're dull this place puts one so damnably in mind of the infernal regions."

He sat up on the table under the window, while Miss Petersen called to Ida from the kitchen: would she come and hook her waist-band for her?

"Are you going out in this weather?" said Qvam.

Ach, Miss Petersen was going to "the sales."

"Oh," said Ida, kneeling to hook the skirt—and at once her voice was clear and bright; "then you might look out for furniture covers."

Qvam raised his head sharply:

"Are you going to get married?" he asked.

"No, but I'm going to take a flat." She stood up.

Qvam got down from the table.

"Well," he said; "that's a very sensible idea."

As he went by the kitchen door he jerked his head back, indicating Bertelsen.

"Is *he* going to be passed out?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Good-morning."

Qvam went out; but Miss Petersen took a seat. She wanted to hear all about it: *where* it was to be, and *when* she had made up her mind.

"Oh, I've thought about it for a long time," said Ida; and she described the flat and the furniture she

wanted, and the covers she would choose, improvising about all the things she had never thought of—and persuading herself she had been thinking of them for a long time.

"But in the big room I'm going to have leather-covered chairs," she said.

All at once Bertelsen raised his head:

"When's she coming?" he asked.

"At eleven, Bertelsen."

Miss Petersen grew quite sentimental over the flat.

"Why, then you'll have quite a home," she said.

Ida smiled at the word and was silent for a moment, still smiling.

"Yes," she said, quietly, with a dreamy look in her eyes.

Miss Petersen was gone—to carry the news further—and Ida took water to the patients in the Men's Ward and shook up their pillows. Then she sat knitting at the table under the window. A subdued groaning came up from the "violent corridor" filling the house with a hushed and secret lamentation.

"When's she coming?" asked Bertelsen again.

"Soon, Bertelsen;" and she went on with her work: it seemed, when she had no one to talk to about it, as though she could not properly grasp the idea of her "home."

A couple of deafening blows were struck on the door and Ida opened. It was Mrs. Bertelsen, and even as she entered her face was convulsed with weeping. "Please come in," said Ida; "he's expecting you." And Mrs. Bertelsen went to her son, who did not get up. "Good-day, Jakob," she said with a strangely timid humility, but he only answered with a growl. Then he moved over to the table and his mother followed. Her face, all the flesh of which was wasted away, and her hat—a

summer hat covered with a piece of old cloth—were outlined against the grey wall.

Ida left them; from the kitchen she could hear Bertelsen's voice incessantly, in an angry, suppressed snarl, and his mother's timid: "Oh but, Jakob, oh but, Jakob—"

The door of the Women's Ward flew open. It was Kjær; she threw a glance round the room and then ran out to the kitchen.

"Goodness, Maid, when is it to be?" she said; "so you're taking a flat!"

She insisted, breathlessly, on hearing all about it, and Ida repeated it all; as she spoke, her own words seemed to fence her in; and all the time Bertelsen went on talking, louder and more excitedly, purple in the face and shaking both his fists, always at the same height, as though he had been put in irons.

"But Jakob dear, Jakob dear—"

"What a duck of a doll's house you'll have," Kjær was saying out in the kitchen; "goodness me, how glad I am."

And with a sudden jerk of the head she asked in a different tone:

"Has she come to say good-bye?"

"Yes, poor thing."

Bertelsen pushed away his chair and stood up; through the door they saw his mother take hold of his arm, but he shook her off.

"Damned old drab!" he shrieked. As he went into the ward he poured another stream of abuse over her, while the bony mother stood motionless in the middle of the room, quivering a little, like a target when the bullets strike it.

Then she turned, and Ida went up and took her hands.

"Oh but, Mrs. Bertelsen," she said; "it will be better for him where he's going."

Mrs. Bertelsen did not answer. There was only a gentle heaving where once her breast had been, and she told the story for the hundredth time, the thousandth time, of how it had come—upon this son as upon his two elder brothers:

"He was in an office, you see, just the same as his brothers. And everything was all right, till one day he walked out of his office and came home, just the same as his brothers; he just got up from his stool and came away; he'd laid his pens neatly in a row (I saw them myself) and put his ruler in its place and his books were made up (I saw them myself) till the moment he got up and came home, and it was all over with him, just the same as his brothers."

Her tears would not come, but it *sounded* as if she wept:

"Just the same as his brothers."

"But it will be better for him where he's going," said Ida again.

But Mrs. Bertelsen only shook her head and said, with a blind look in her eyes:

"And then it's one's own fault—"

Those words had been Mrs. Bertelsen's first and last thought ever since the day the Senior Physician had turned on her angrily and said: "What business have people to breed children from a drunken man?"

"And then it's one's own fault—"

Ida had not heard the door, but on turning round she saw the gentleman from "A" standing there; he stood in his doorway looking at the two women with a smile.

Mrs. Bertelsen released her hands from Ida's and went towards the door of the passage.

"Won't you say good-bye?" asked Ida, and Mrs. Bertelsen looked into the ward, where her son sat huddled up on the edge of his bed.

"No, let him be," she said. And Ida closed the outer door, as Mrs. Bertelsen turned for the last time and fixed her eyes for a second on the door of the ward before she left.

"Do you want anything, Doctor?" asked Ida.

But the gentleman from "A" simply stood there with the same smile on his face. (Oh yes, there's no doubt he's mad, thought Ida.)

"No, thank you," he replied, without moving.

It was growing dusk.

All day long there had been a jangling of keys, as the nurses darted in and out to ask about the flat, and Ida had answered them, almost feverishly, describing this thing and that.

Now Miss Kjær was sitting at the table with her, and they talked, in a rather disjointed way, of the same subject.

"Hm," said Kjær; "at any rate you'll have a place where you can sleep."

Ida nodded. Today she was always catching herself sitting with her eyes shut. Now she opened them. Bertelsen was wandering about the ward like a shadow, and suddenly his mother's voice came back to her; it had haunted her all day.

"Poor Mrs. Bertelsen," she said.

They were silent for a while. From the "violent corridor" they heard the same dull groaning that had gone on since morning, a vague and distant lamentation, while Bertelsen continually drifted past the door, like a shadow fading into the dark.

"Yes, I wonder what a woman like her gets out of life?" said Miss Kjær, thinking of Mrs. Bertelsen.

She was silent again for a few moments.

"Well, she'll die some day," she said, answering her own thought.

The gentleman in "A" was walking up and down, as usual. The hushed groaning from below seemed to blend rhythmically with his footsteps.

"It's pretty depressing today, all the same," said Kjær, getting up.

Ida shuddered involuntarily.

"Yes," she said; "we'd better light up."

Kjær went out and the patients returned from the basement. Soon after Josefine swept in with the dinner, and Ida banged at Miss Petersen's door to wake her.

Josefine was in a pretty bad humour just at this time. Not so much as a snatch of a song was ever heard on the stairs, and now she was quite absent-minded as she served out the food.

"No, Miss," she said; "don't you ever do anything for a man.

"They're a lot of dirty dogs," she declared, setting about her work again. Another paternity case had come to light a few days before, and the culprit was Tram-conductor Andersen.

When Ida came down to the dining-room Miss Friis was there alone. She was making ruches for a petticoat from some old black lace. Miss Friis was getting more and more particular about keeping her under-garments up to date.

While Ida was drinking her tea Miss Friis said:

"So I hear you're going to have a place of your own. When's the wedding to be?"

She laughed a little, pulling at the ruches.

"Well, I suppose it won't be in church."

Miss Friis hummed, as she went on with her work:

"I never thought, though, you would be so sensible,"

she commented all at once, nodding to Ida. Whereupon she said no more. But the cup shook in Ida's hand.

As Ida was going up to her room she met Miss Boserup on the stairs.

"No doubt you'll be leaving now," said Boserup.

Ida had had no such idea.

"Oh, there'll be a vacancy all right, thank God," was Boserup's opinion. "Jörgensen started getting her flat ready a whole year before she married."

Ida's face flared up in an instant; then she turned quite pale.

"I suppose one is allowed to arrange a place to live in," she said. She had never spoken so severely, and she did not know why she did so now.

But when Boserup came into the dining-room she warned them:

"For mercy's sake don't say anything to Brandt about her flat. That dove's got claws.—But a person who takes a flat and furnishes it with leather armchairs ought not to take the bread out of other people's mouths."

Överud remarked in her provincial accent:

"Leather armchairs, that's what they had in the smoking-room at Broholm—it looked so well and they were so nice and cool to sit on—after a dinner-party."—

Ida had lighted the lamp in her room. She could not tell why her feeling of restless anxiety had taken hold of her again. But all at once she sat down to write to Karl:

"—But you *mustn't* be angry, do you hear? you really mustn't—about you know what. It was only because I was so afraid, and can't you understand it? But you know, my wishes are always the same as yours; you know that, don't you? And it was only because I had a

kind of idea that your mother was there the whole time —but you mustn't be angry, my own dearest—will you now?"—

Karl was pulling on his riding-breeches, when Julius brought him the letter next morning.

He glanced at the envelope, wrinkling his nose a little, before opening it, and the same expression was on his face as he read the note. Then he finished dressing. But as he went downstairs he struck his whip against his thigh:

"Women always brood so ridiculously over every damned thing."

Kate was already in the saddle when he appeared.

"*Nom d'un chien,*" she said; "*vous n'êtes pas matinal.*"

Karl thrust out his lips:

"I had business letters to read," he said, with his foot in the stirrup.

Kate looked up and waved her whip to her mother. Mrs. Mourier always came to the window in her dressing-jacket to see "the young couple" start for their ride.

It was after lunch on Wednesday, and Mrs. Gersdorff was writing to her sister, Mrs. von Eichbaum:

"Dear Emilie,

I am writing because it is my day and we arranged that I should write every Wednesday. Otherwise nothing has happened here, except of course that we miss you very badly, Mille. Your house is as clean as a new pin, only waiting for you to come back to it (the hyacinths between the windows have come out; two of them turned out red, though Asmussen promised faithfully that they would all be blue; the colour is pretty enough

for that matter, but I told him about it when I was ordering flowers for the birthday at the Schleppegrells). It was very pleasant and nice (we had a maraschino soufflé, you know, but it was not quite a success; Anna is always so fond of trying new receipts), though we were two more than they can seat.

The young people left the table—Karl took in Kate —and had their dessert in the little room. I am afraid Fanny's prospects are not very bright. Miss Juul told me the other day at Pastor Jörgensen's lecture (he has finished with Baggesen now; he spoke, my dear, for three-quarters of an hour about Sofie Örsted, which of course was pure waste of time for those of our family, who knew more about it), that in all probability the Princess will have no Maid of Honour at all. The fact is, no doubt, that they are expecting the Saxon Prince to marry her very soon, and then of course it will be unnecessary. Besides which it is only natural that they want to save money. Now Anna is talking about Fanny's taking up massage. And that is only a question of muscular strength, which they say she has, in spite of her digestion, which is still bad. The best thing would be, of course, if Skeel would at last make up his mind to marry her. I expect Karl has written to you. I do not see much of him, but I hear him moving about at his good, regular hours. I always said, dear Mille, that if he only had something regular to do he would settle down like the rest of the family. Praise be to God, there is nothing frisky in our disposition. Kate and he take long rides every morning (she seems to me to be quieting down and taking more and more after Vilhelmine) and talk a good deal of French: you see, they can recall the time they were together at Lausanne. In the French lectures we have got as far as Chateaubriand. It is very interesting, but

he had a turbulent mind. Vilhelmine is reading his works; you know how thorough she is. At the first sign of spring they will start work on the new house at Ludvigsbakke. Karl and Kate are always altering the plans between them, but it will be a lovely house (Mr. Schmidt, the Privy Councillor from Aarhus, you know, who was at the birthday party, told me that Mourier was now making his two hundred thousand a year) with bathrooms as at Aix-les-Bains. They tell me little Brandt called here the other day and asked if she should look after your flowers. It was very thoughtful of her, but quite unnecessary, I consider, as you have Ane for that. Ane said she looked unwell and oddly aged. But then she is getting on for the time when girls become old maids. The kitchen chimney has been smoking, and at last I sent for Petersen (he had just got a grandson, so I had him in for a glass of Madeira), but he said it was the weather and there was nothing to be done. Give my love to Aline; it is a sad thing about her leg. Brunn says (he looks worn out, poor man, with all the worries of his practice) that it must be a kind of paralysis—and no wonder. Heavens, my dear, to think that people of that age should care to expose themselves to such emotions. All send their love.

Your affectionate Sister
Lotte.

P. S. The other day Vilhelmine brought me her and Kate's photographs, beautifully framed with their monogram. I have put them for the present on the big étagère. Kate's is charming, with her slight figure. They were taken by Hansen, as I advised. Fanny was taken the other day by another man, and it was horrible. I believe Anna is expecting the chocolate."

Mrs. von Eichbaum replied on the Saturday:

"Dear Charlotte,

Thank you for your letter and for all your excellent news. We are fairly comfortable here (though I will not deny that I look forward to my good, quiet home), but on account of Aline we shall certainly stay till the end of the month, for I think it best that she should not come home till she has entirely regained her balance. Her legs are somewhat better (Dr. Brouardel, a very capable doctor, who has given me a kind of ointment or something of the sort for our dryness of the hands, to be rubbed on morning and night, says it is a weakness of the knees) but not yet well; it seems as though they will not carry her properly, though she has grown very thin. However, when the sun shines in the forenoon we generally sit on the terrace to enjoy the open air. Of course we never mention the person, nor do we allude to what has happened, as you will understand. That kind of thing can only be fought out within oneself. The maid tells me that Madame is often in tears in the morning, which I pretend not to notice. If she has tears, she had better cry them out. You know my opinion that if there is nobody there to see, people soon get tired of crying. But in a fortnight's time, I think, we shall leave, and then after a couple of days Aline will go on to her home. And when she has been at home a month or so, she will come to town, as if nothing had happened, just as she always does in the spring. But of course there is no need to talk of all this. Here in the hotel they still think she is taking an after-cure from Vichy, as I said as soon as I came. Vilhelmine has written to me (I also had a letter from Anna, who is a little troublesome when one is travelling, with all her commissions; I never thought Fanny would be a Maid of Honour, they do not take them so young, for the look of it), she was full of Karl's praises. I am

delighted that he can see so much of Mine and Kate, as she writes, if only he is not neglecting his office. One thing I must ask you to see to for Heaven's sake, that their flat is constantly aired. I should never forgive myself if they had so much as an attack of bronchitis. You know, when one is away one is liable to get ideas which almost disturb one's rest (and spending the whole day with Aline is not without its effect on one's nerves either) and sometimes I wake up in a perspiration at the thought that there might be some infection from Mary. And nowadays one never opens a paper without reading about all these microbes everywhere. Karl writes that little Brandt has taken a flat for herself outside the Hospital. I should have thought a room would have been enough for her, as she has board and lodging anyhow, and she is not accustomed to anything else. But that must be her affair (she has taken it in Ole Suhr Street, you remember visiting those houses for the Children's Welfare Association, three rooms, with glaring wall-papers), one should never interfere with other people's concerns. I was thinking, Lotte, that if you saw her, you might perhaps ask her about an efficacious disinfectant. She must know, as she is at the Hospital. And the idea of infection gives me no peace; that some kind of illness might fall upon that healthy family. I will ask you one day, when you have time, to take my savings bank book (it is in the drawer of the writing-table over by the window) and draw fifty crowns and give them to Karl. Naturally it is costing him something to accompany Kate, who never thinks of money, and living is not expensive here, if one practises reasonable economy. Ask Ane to cover up the furniture in the morning room with a pair of sheets, don't let her forget it. That stamped velvet is so liable to fade, now that the sun

will be on it longer with that southern aspect (here it is almost spring and one sees violets in the streets). Thank Vilhelmine for the photographs—yes, Kate has just her figure as a girl. Aline sends many messages, and give my love to all.

Your devoted Sister
Mille.

P. S. Perhaps you might ask Bruun, if you see him, whether there could be any question of infection, with those painted walls. I have been to the Reformed Church. The language was beautiful, but in my opinion the sermon was wordy and overdone and lacked the firm religious reasoning and the solid construction Petri gives us. All the same it was a pleasure to listen to it, as I said, on account of the language. Tell Karl to take care of catching cold after riding, it so easily happens. Anna will receive a supply of the chocolate we drink here in the morning. It goes farther than what you get at home."

IDA SLIPPED ALONG the passage at the Café Rörholm; then darted into the private room, with an odd contraction of the shoulders.

No, he was not there—not yet.

The barmaid, whose fringe was still confined in its net, had seen her go into the passage:

"Hm, now you'll have another breakfast to bring back again, Ellingsen," she said.

Mr. Ellingsen gave her no answer. He never condescended to gossip with the staff, but today and for the future he had made up his mind not to bring in the tray until "the gentleman" had appeared.

"It doesn't make much difference whether he comes or not; we can count on the money anyhow," remarked the barmaid in her shrill voice, as Ellingsen went off

with a tablecloth. In the passage he came upon a youthful couple who were laughing and chaffing. The lady, a chubby, rosy-cheeked little thing, let down the flap of the door opposite Ida's room with a smack:

"Engaged!" she cried.

"Engaged," said her companion, hitting the flap with his stick; and the younger waiter, who had already taken their order, shouted to the buffet:

"Tea, toast, butter, four boiled eggs—"

"Six!" roared the gentleman, and slammed the door.

"Six!" the word was passed on like a fanfare from the buffet to the kitchen; while Ellingsen, with the cloth over his arm, opened Ida's door and she just had time to hide a couple of little parcels under her cloak.

"You seem busy," she said.

"Yes," replied Ellingsen, laying the cloth and smoothing it out with his shrivelled hands, so that his celluloid cuffs shot out; "thank God, we mustn't complain—"

Ida had seated herself (latterly it seemed to give her a sort of stitch in her side every time she turned in to the Rörholm), and Ellingsen went on:

"But now when it's getting on for spring is always the best time for our business."

"Yes," replied Ida. Probably she did not hear a word of what he said, but she had got into the way lately of talking to all the staff, Ellingsen and the barmaid and the rest of them; much as people do in hotels, when they are haunted by a fear of not being able to meet their bills.

"The weather is so fine," she said.

"It's the season," said Ellingsen. He was preparing to go, when a burst of laughter came from the other side of the passage, and Ida said: "How happy they are."

Ellingsen put his head on one side and smiled: "Yes,

that's the young couple who've just begun to come here." He went to the door and added, as he slipped out:

"Then we'll wait a little while."

Ida kept her seat. A strangely fixed look had come into her eyes, and she thought—as she had been thinking ever since she came in: If only he would tell me when he's not coming. But suddenly she smiled at the thought of Karl's untroubled face:

"He doesn't think of it, that's all," she said to herself, still smiling.

There was a double knock at the door and she flew up.

"Is it you?" she said. Her voice broke, and there was Karl in the doorway.

"Are you here?" he said. "I've brought somebody with me;" and he stepped aside to let Knuth pass. Ida had checked herself and turned fiery red, and Karl said —perhaps rather too abruptly and rather too gaily:

"Knuth was so deuced hungry, you see."

There was a little pause, and then Knuth said: "Please forgive my intrusion." Ida gave him her hand, mechanically, without being aware that there were tears in her eyes:

"But I know Count Knuth," she said.

And after another awkward moment she said, as though she *must* slip away:

"I'll go and order the coffee," and went out.

Neither of the men found anything to say before the door closed and they were alone.

"Well, damn it all," said Karl, with an air of shaking himself free of something; "it'll pass off— Take your coat off."

Ida was out of the room. For an instant, a fraction of a second and only with her elbow, she supported

herself against the wall. But on reaching the buffet and seeing the barmaid's rat-like eyes upon her, she said with sudden cheerfulness:

"Oh, miss, we shall be three—" and she stood there talking and laughing gaily, without a thought, till Ellingsen was ready to take in the breakfast, and she followed him into the room, where Karl and Knuth sat waiting. Knuth began to talk, in a subdued and respectful tone, raising his eyes and lowering them, of the lovely weather and of his barrack life: "You live in a kind of barrack too, don't you, Miss Brandt?" he said. "Yes," murmured Ida. But Knuth went on talking, in the same respectful way, of the theatre, which would soon be over, and of the spring, which was coming on.

Ida answered Yes and No And again no sound was heard but the clatter of the cups, as Ellingsen handed them round, and the jingle of a silver chain that Knuth wore on his wrist.

"Now let's go for the grub," said Karl, before Ellingsen was well out of the room.

And they began to eat, Ida holding her egg-cup in the air, as though afraid she would not get her spoon to her mouth, and Knuth sitting a trifle away from the table, in the same respectful attitude. But Karl groped for Ida's cold hand under the table and squeezed it.

"Isn't there some baker's stuff?" he asked—he spoke in a caressing tone, unconsciously avoiding too great familiarity; "Miss Brandt always has some cakes in her pocket."

Ida got up and produced the parcels.

"Yes, what did I tell you?" said Karl; and as Ida cut the cake he laid his hand on her wrist, still trying to make much of her, but she took her hand away.

"Won't you have some?" she said, handing the

plate to Knuth, who took a slice with a sudden jerk.

"It's a lovely cake," said Karl; "but we must have port with it. To clear the throat."

Knuth got up, rather too quickly, to order it: "Allow me," he said. He was scarcely out of the room before Karl rose and stood behind Ida:

"There's no harm in bringing a friend, is there?" he said, bending over her.

Ida did not answer. Her face was as pale as a corpse, framed in his hands.

"Dash it, Puss, don't let's have any nonsense," he said, keeping his eyes on her; and suddenly he gave her a kiss, behind the ear.

Ida had not moved; but all at once she got up, trembling all over, as though with cold, and clung to him:

"But haven't I given you everything?" she said. There was something in her tone like a cry that was not uttered.

"Puss, Puss, Puss."

There was genuine tenderness in his voice, and something that one might almost believe to be pain:

"Puss, Puss."

A smile came over Ida's face. "Now I'll be good," she said, drying her eyes; "now it's over."

And suddenly she ran to her cloak, got out her purse and put it in his pocket.

"Oh, I've got enough for that," he said, giving himself a kind of shrug.

But Ida stroked his hair:

"He is so good-natured," she said.

Karl laughed: "Bless me, he's one of those who behave just like a woman when they get spoony."

He laughed again: "And he *is* spoony, by gad," he said.

Knuth returned with Ellingsen and the port, and Karl said:

"We're laughing at you, Knuth."

"Oh, what for?" asked Knuth.

"Here's luck!" said Karl, and emptied his glass, while Ida followed his example and clinked with Knuth, who drank to her with the same little jerk as before. "Thank you, Miss Brandt," he said. Karl laughed again, winking at Ida and stretching out his legs:

"This is jolly, a damned sight better than riding."

Ida poured out more coffee and handed the cups. The sun fell upon the cloth and upon her hair, as she bent down. She began to talk of Jutland, of Aarhus, where "Count Knuth had lived"—

She had been there the year before last for two days, with Franck and Olivia, on her holiday—oh, what grand woods there were in the neighbourhood.

As Ida drank her coffee she went on talking about the trip to Aarhus and the Francks and the walk along the shore. It certainly never occurred to her that perhaps she was using these reminiscences as a sort of social backing.

"Yes," she said; "how lovely it was on the Strand Promenade—we were there one evening—Olivia and I."

"Ha," said Karl, "now we've got to Olivia."

But Knuth, who probably took in nothing but the sound of her voice and to whom the name Aarhus only suggested the dry and sun-baked pavement in front of the Cathedral, remarked rather absently:

"Yes, I put in a couple of years at that hotel."

Karl sat astride his chair, facing the others and rocking backwards and forwards with his cigarette between his lips. Then with a sly glance at Knuth and a wink at Ida, he said:

"You're deuced fond of the sex, aren't you, Knuth," and he chuckled with inner satisfaction.

Ida turned red, though she smiled as she hastened to say:

"But we did not get to Marselisborg."

And Knuth replied, blushing perhaps more deeply than she:

"Oh, we were often there—from our regiment."

Karl was still rocking his chair and seemed pleased with himself, as he looked across the table at Ida, who was shading her face from the sun; she was always so girlishly pretty when she talked about the Francks.

And all at once Karl said, nodding and thrusting out his lips, with a smile in his eyes:

"*Mais il n'a pas tort, monsieur le comte; madame est bien jolie.*"

Without her knowing it a sudden cloud passed over Ida's face at the sound of the French words (Karl used so many French phrases of late), but then she smiled again, yielding happily to the power of Karl's eyes, and she took a sip of her glass, with her eyes on his.

Till presently she said (none of them had spoken for a few moments), and there was a touch of melancholy in her words:

"How long ago it seems."

Karl, whose meditations were following another train, puffed the smoke through his nose and remarked:

"But, my word, those lumps of business fellows at Aarhus know their way about."

Without hearing what he said Ida turned to Karl with a pair of gleaming eyes:

"I wonder where one's next holiday will be?"

And Karl replied, as the smile came back into his eyes:

"Ah, the devil knows—"

But Ida had to go; it was getting far too late. Knuth got up and touched her glass with his: "Thank you for a pleasant morning, Miss Brandt," he said. There was something odd, something like a jumping-jack about Knuth's movements when he was suddenly roused from his absence of mind.

Then Karl stood up.

"Well—*allez-y;*" and as he helped Ida on with her cloak he said to Knuth—perhaps he was following the Aarhus train of thought, or possibly it was only the French words that reminded him:

"God, how she made Beauté gallop yesterday in the Deer Park."

He stood for a moment with the cigarette dangling between his lips:

"Yes, she's a game one, my word."

Knuth went out into the passage and Karl put his coat on. For a moment he held Ida before him: "Now, Puss," he said, and all at once his voice became tender, on seeing the expression of her eyes; "we did have a good time, didn't we?"

"Yes."

She leaned against him.

"If only you come—" and she whispered, with a smile that quivered a little at the corners of her mouth:

"It's so hard to go out of that door when one has been waiting here alone."

One would almost have thought that Karl went red at her words. But he only said, very gently:

"Thanks for this time, Puss."

And hurriedly, with the old look of fear in her eyes (but perhaps it was only because they were parting for the moment), Ida threw her arms about his neck:

"Dear, dear—"

They went out. On reaching the street all three walked abreast. Ida was pale; it could be seen now that she was in the open air. But Karl, who was whistling softly to himself, said cheerfully:

"Now we could go and have a look at the flat."

Ida turned red as fire; but Karl went on in the same tone:

"Miss Brandt's taken a flat—we can go and see it."

"But it isn't ready," said Ida; her voice broke with harshness, making Karl look at her in real surprise:

"All right then, we won't."

Soon after she left them.

"Thank you, Miss Brandt," said Knuth, as he let go of her hand.

Karl and he walked on side by side. Karl was smoking and Knuth was chewing the handle of his whip.

"You're a lucky man, Eichbaum," said the lieutenant after a while.

Karl puffed out his cigarette smoke, but Knuth went on in the same dreamy tone:

"You see, it's the affectionate girls one wants."

Karl walked on a few paces before answering:

"Yes, they're the girls one wants." He laid a hesitating stress on "wants," as though checking himself before some tacit "but"; and they had gone some little way again before he said in his drawling tone:

"But you're such a silly old dreamer, Knuth—and a woman-worshipper."

The whip left Knuth's lips with a nervous jerk.

"Well, what else is there?" he said.

"Damn it, man, there's one's life," said Karl, twitching his nose. "And that's why one has to reckon things out—unfortunately."

Knuth walked on with an absent look.

"Yes," he said; "one reckons things out—but I don't

know, sometimes it seems as if there was someone else who added up the figures."

"Are you a philosopher too?" asked Karl with an air of boredom.

But Knuth continued in the same tone and with the same absent look:

"But one ought to have gone into the Navy."

And after a pause:

"Then at any rate one could have gone to Siam. And *there* they fight."

"Damn it, you've been drinking, Knuth," said Karl, throwing away his cigarette. And as he stopped at the corner he continued, following his own train of thought:

"You see, one doesn't take a girl for ever and amen. —That's the whole point," he concluded, waving goodbye with his whip.

Karl entered the office, far too late, and the bookkeeper said some unpleasant things to him. He had done so pretty often of late. But Karl did not answer him and simply sat down at his desk and opened the register. The blotting-paper was covered with sketches of the stables at Ludvigsbakke.

Hell; this evening he'd got to go to another dance.

All at once he began to smile. He was thinking of Knuth:

When he comes across a skirt I'm hanged if he's not as bad as that fellow who swam the Hellespont.

And suddenly he felt a longing, a purely physical longing for Ida, stronger than he had known for a long time.—

Ida had gone up to her flat and taken off her outdoor things. Furniture was everywhere, new and old, packed in canvas: now she must set to work. But all at once, in the midst of the old furniture, whose edges peeped out through canvas and bast, she threw herself on the

new bed, with her face in the pillows and her arms stretched out, as though they were nailed to this new, broad couch—and she wept and wept.—

Karl had been with her the same day, in the afternoon, up in her room; now he had to go and he was amorous and warm—even now.

Ida had her arms round his neck.

"Where will you be this evening?" she asked.

"At home."

He scarcely knew he was lying, until he had said it.

"Good-bye, Puss," he said, and kissed her hair.

Then he left her.

Ida sat for a long time before her disordered bed. But when she came down to tea Kjær exclaimed:

"Why, what's this? The Maid's eyes are red."

From behind the urn Miss Helgesen was talking of the gentleman in "A." Surely the Professor would soon have to make up his mind:

"Now the patient has worked it out that the same number of people every year write a T instead of an F," said Miss Helgesen.

And Miss Friis, who was ostentatiously darning black silk stockings, one of which was drawn like a glove high up her arm, said:

"Ugh, that horrid person; he's just like a ghost."

Miss Kjær replied, looking at the gas-jet across the table:

"No, he's not that—but there's something about him, as if he was quite sure that we should all have to go down his throat."

But Miss Överud remarked, alluding to Ida's red eyes:

"It comes of all that sitting up at night. It bothers me too. But I use bottles of sea-water for it."

Ida went to her night duty.

Julius opened the door of the cab at the arrival side of the station, and Mrs. Gersdorff got out.

She went through the hall into the waiting-room, where she found Mrs. Mourier on a seat.

"Oh, my dear, good-morning," she said; "what a raw day."

But Mrs. Mourier, who had tears in her eyes every moment, declared that she hadn't had a wink of sleep all night: "For think of Lotte lying there in her berth and listening for every beat of that steam-engine!"

She was thinking all the time of Aline, whom they had come to meet.

"And then there is *this*, my dear," she said; "one ought not to show oneself too indulgent either."

"My dear Vilhelmine," said Mrs. Gersdorff, sitting down by her side; "in this I say as Emilie says: we have only to take it calmly and above all let it appear as if nothing had happened."

Nevertheless Mrs. Gersdorff, without knowing it, fingered at her gloves, smoothing them back so that the shape of each nail was visible.

"Yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Mourier, wagging her head; "but one can't help thinking about her."

Mrs. Gersdorff insisted in a rather sterner and very decisive tone:

"But, my dear Mine, *having* gone away, she has got to come back again."

She was beginning to talk of what a change of climate it would be for Emilie, when she heard Mrs. Schleppegrell arriving in a series of little groans, with Fanny in her wake: "My dears, what weather!—one can feel the damp to one's very marrow in spite of my French under-vest—"

Her words came in a torrent: "But as I said to Vil-

helm" (she seated herself), "today we must put in an appearance—"

Fanny had posted herself by the door to the platform. She had the face she wore on her weekly visits for the Children's Welfare Association, when she always kept the width of the room between herself and its inmates.

Mrs. Schleppegrell fell to talking of the chocolate she had received, and of Emilie, who was always so thoughtful, till she suddenly looked round at the walls and observed:

"Dear friends, how dismal this is—it's just as if one had to wait in a criminal court."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Gersdorff; "this waiting-room is really scandalous in a town like Copenhagen."

They said no more till they caught sight of Kate and Karl, in their riding clothes, on the platform beyond the glass door.

"There we have the young people," said Mrs. Gersdorff, and they all nodded and smiled, while Fanny examined them through her lorgnette.

Kate nodded back with the skirt of her habit over her arm:

"*Voilà l'Église triomphante*," she said, thrusting out her lips—a habit she had caught from Karl.

"Yes, by Jove, there are the aunts," said Karl. He had both hands in his breeches pockets as they strolled on.

But suddenly Kate turned and shook at the door of the waiting-room.

"I must have a look at them," she said.

She wanted to get in, but the door was locked. "All right," she gave it up; "the army will advance in due course."

Karl, who was standing by her side looking in at the aunts, laughed aloud.

They kept their faces to the glass door, standing close together, and both laughed in happy intimacy at their family.

The noise and bustle increased and people were constantly popping in and out, when the Admiral appeared. He had a cold in the head and bowed to the ladies in turn before coming to an anchor beside Mrs. Mourier and blowing his nose.

"Well, my dear," he said; "here we are, you see, with life-buoys and gangway and all."

"Heavens, yes, Admiral," said Mrs. Mourier—no doubt she expected a more resonant note from him; "indeed, I can feel my knees shaking."

The heavy baggage trolleys were now rolling along the platform, and a crowd of strangers was collecting round the doors—not at Fanny's; she had a power of describing an invisible circle about herself, creating a vacuum in her vicinity. The porters opened the doors.

"There they are," said Mrs. Schleppegrell, starting up from her seat, as though to lead the advance.

Mrs. Gersdorff had seized Mrs. Mourier's arm almost convulsively and said, with a sudden tremor of emotion which she tried to quell:

"Heavens, Mine, this should be an occasion for rejoicing."

They had all moved towards the door.

"Fanny!" said Mrs. Schleppegrell; "are you coming?"

Corpulent and fussy, like a master of the ceremonies, she turned to Mrs. Gersdorff:

"We ought all to be together—where are the young people?"

"Here's the cavalry," said Karl.

The Admiral brought up the rear, with a look on his

face as if he were attending the funeral of a distinguished brother officer of the sister service.

People crowded forward on the platform and Mrs. Gersdorff's flock stood compact, a little flurried as they saw the locomotive approaching; while Mrs. Schleppegrell could not keep her arms still, making ready to embrace the returned travellers, and Mrs. Mourier snatched the opportunity of wiping her eyes.

"Do you see them? Does anyone see them?" asked Mrs. Gersdorff as carriage after carriage glided past.

"Vilhelm, are you there?" said the Admiral's wife.

Kate flipped at Karl with her whip: "Look at the court masseuse," she whispered. There was not the smallest twitch in Fanny's face, as she inspected the first-class carriages through her glass.

"Kate!" called Mrs. Mourier, who was quite overpowered by emotion and wanted to have her daughter by her.

"*There* she is," said Mrs. Gersdorff, waving her hand, and then they saw Mrs. von Eichbaum standing erect at the door of her carriage.

They were all expecting to see the other face as they waved. Mrs. Mourier did not know that two great tears were running down her cheeks.

"There," whispered Kate to Karl.

"You're not expecting Aline, are you?" came Mrs. von Eichbaum's voice from the window. They had all kept pace with the advancing train, as though drawn along by a rope, and now they came to a sudden stop. Nobody said a word, till after a moment's pause Mrs. Gersdorff began to wave again and the train stopped.

"She got out at Ringsted" (Mrs. von Eichbaum's first glance had sought out Karl and lighted on him in his riding-breeches by Kate's side) "and drove home in her good landau with Feddersen."

Kate turned on her heel: "*Quelle blague,*" she said to Karl; "philippine!"

"No go."

"Isn't it? Pooh, you thought just the same, as your mother put her toes to the ground."

And suddenly Mrs. Schleppegrell, who had required a moment to collect herself, was heard saying: "Heavens, Emilie, it was on your account we came"; Mrs. Gersdorff burst into tears as she embraced Mrs. von Eichbaum, and Mrs. Mourier said: "Oh, then she is at home by now—"

And all at once they talked aloud, quite loudly, of the journey and the chocolate and the steamer, as if Mrs. Aline had never existed, while Mrs. von Eichbaum stood for a moment with both her hands in Kate's.

"But," she said, almost with emotion; "you look quite flourishing."

The Admiral's party had already taken themselves off. Mrs. Schleppegrell and Fanny had to indulge in a cab. They were going to call on the Honourable Miss Juul.

Mrs. Schleppegrell expressed no opinion as yet on the event of the day, but observed:

"Kate Mourier is getting a little stout."

Fanny, who had turned round to watch Kate and Karl take their horses from the man who had been holding them, remarked tersely: "She's a hussy."

Fanny had overheard Kate's remark about the court masseuse.

Mrs. Schleppegrell did not contradict her daughter: "But you will see," she said simply; "she will always get her own way. Those are the kind of girls who get provided for in our day."

"As long as they can provide for *him,*" replied Fanny.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister had also taken a cab; they drove home by themselves on account of the quantity of baggage.

"Heavens, Emilie," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "I declare I turned quite cold for a moment—when nobody saw her—till I recognized your sound sense."

"Dearest Lotte," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum; "it was the only thing to do, if it could be arranged."

Mrs. von Eichbaum nodded through the window with a sudden smile: it was Kate and Karl trotting past the cab and waving to her.

"How well she looks on horseback," she said, still watching them, with moisture in her eyes; "if only Karl is not neglecting his office."

"My dear, Karl has become a regular chronometer," said Mrs. Gersdorff, adding:

"And I don't suppose he'll sit on that office stool for ever."

The two sisters sat holding each other's hands.—

They had reached home, and Mrs. von Eichbaum sat in her old place on the sofa, after having had Ane in to pay her respects.

"Ah, my dear, what a blessing it is to be home again within one's four good walls. For you can guess there are things one does not care to put on paper, and between ourselves it was not all pure enjoyment—"

Mrs. Gersdorff guessed as much: "Yes, I admired your letters—which told one nothing."

"The worst part of it was all the endless talking—to *me*, when I always maintain that one need never know more than one wants to know. But Aline insists on laying bare her inmost heart. Just imagine, if she didn't have a regular attack of her loquacity last night, if you please—in a steamer cabin, where every word could be

heard in the passages. At last I gave her chloral and told her that without it she'd be seasick."

Mrs. von Eichbaum paused and reflected for a moment.

"But," she said, "what trials a person must go through, when she abandons her safe retreat."

Mrs. von Eichbaum paused again and seemed to gaze into a long vista of the inconceivable.

"But," she resumed, "it always freshens up one's languages to go abroad."

Mrs. Gersdorff got up: her sister must be in need of rest. In the morning room lay a bouquet; it was from little Brandt. Mrs. von Eichbaum looked at it. It was charming:

"But, Heavens, my dear, what a lot of attention," she said; "really it becomes almost an annoyance."

Mrs. Gersdorff replied:

"Yes, Mille, but it's very natural that the person should wish to show her gratitude."

And she added, as a new idea struck her: "By her advice I made a pretext for burning sulphur at the Mouriers'— But now you must rest, Mille."

She held out her hand, and with sudden emotion the sisters kissed each other with tears in their eyes.—

Karl sat in his office. He was thinking of the philippine. The forfeit was a riding-whip; gad, it would have to have a gold knob. He nodded over his register: but he'd wait till after the first, when he got his salary.

Ida had kept an admittance order till the evening. When she came in Karl had his coat on and standing by the gas-jet.

"Your mother's come, hasn't she?" she said.

"Yes," replied Karl, who had taken the paper; and he turned out the light. "You must excuse me, Puss, but I'm in a deuce of a hurry."

"Do you think I ought to pay her a call?" asked Ida from the darkness.

"Well, why not?" Karl was stumbling about.

"Well, I didn't know—"

She spoke very low.

"Can you find the way?" said Karl, opening the door to the light—

But her hand touched his on the door-handle for an instant, with pathetic haste.

"Good-night," she said.

"Good-night, Puss."

The door of the street opened and there was a ringing of tram-car bells, as Karl went out into the light and the traffic.

Ida had grown thin; she showed it under the glare of the lamps, as she walked back through the silent and shadowy yard.—

Mrs. von Eichbaum was taking tea in her sister's rooms. The lamps were lighted and they talked at their ease of one thing and another. Mrs. von Eichbaum had found another place for the Mourier photographs. She thought she would have them on her writing-table on account of the light:

"Do you know," she said, "I sat there before dinner and took a good look at Kate's portrait. She seems to me to have changed. As though a more thoughtful expression had come over her."

KARL AND IDA were driving out through Kristianshavn; the street-lamps grew fewer and fewer and they heard nothing but the steady trotting of the horse on the uneven paving.

"How dreary it is here," said Ida, who was quietly following the gleams of light from one lamp-post to the next.

"And cold too," said Karl. Both sat huddled up in their corners.

The cab jogged on and they said no more for a while.

"But this fellow drives as if he was going to a funeral," said Karl.

And again they were silent.

"Oh, I went to your mother's," said Ida from her corner.

"Oh," muttered Karl.

"But she wasn't at home."

Karl chewed at his cigar and said, probably without thinking:

"She was at home all right."

Ida no longer heard the horse's hoofs. It was as she had thought, as she had thought ever since: she *was* at home; ever since she stood outside the closed door, she had known that she was at home.

They heard the sound of a few fiddles and horns. "Here's the circus, thank God," said Karl, jumping up in his seat. There was a noisy crowd and a glare of gas.

"Now we can see what's what, anyhow," said Karl, stretching his legs and feeling at home in the light of the gas-flares.

"Two"—he pushed the money to the girl at the ticket-hole, taking a look at her face as he did so—he had lately returned to the habit of peering under every woman's hat.

"What are you sighing for?" he asked, turning to Ida.

"Oh, I'm so cold," she said, with a little start.

Karl took her arm as they entered the tent. "Ah," he said, "the scent of the stables will warm us." A lady in gauze skirts was already flying through hoops and all the seats were full of people from Copenhagen and Amager.

"What a crowd there is," said Ida.

"Yes," said Karl, shaking himself, as the music blared; "it's a change anyhow."

"It's not so bad," he declared after a moment, nodding and taking in with one glance the gauze-skirted lady and her nag and the seven musicians and the audience.

"It's not so bad," he repeated, rubbing his hands so that his chair creaked (a certain sense of well-being was apt to come over him after these tête-à-tête cab drives, when he found himself among a lot of people).

A couple of clowns tumbled into the arena while the shapely lady recovered her breath. They gave a burlesque "jockey act" with sticks for horses, jogging round as though they would split themselves in two.

"It's all right, they've got pads on," said a man behind Karl, and there was a snigger from those within hearing.

"People are jolly well going to have some fun here," said Karl, rubbing his leg, and suddenly (she looked so lonely) he gave Ida's chin a jog with his stick.

She started; then smiled, and for an instant she held the silver knob tight against her chin.

"Yes," she said.

A couple of musical acrobats were playing "The Last Rose of Summer" on one violin, and the audience was getting more and more bored. Karl held his cigar between his teeth and wagged it up and down in time to the mournful tune.

"But," said Ida suddenly, in a low voice; "perhaps it was that I have been there too often."

Karl turned round: "Good God, are you still thinking of that?"

And, guessing at once her secret thought and fear, he

patted her hand good-naturedly (he always felt as if he must console her of late), and said:

"My mother never knows a blessed thing."

Ida grasped his hand tightly: "Oh, my dear," she whispered. But Karl straightened himself in his chair and stretched his legs:

"Ah, there's the Baron," he said, waving to him with his left hand.

The Ringmaster Baron led in two horses. They danced a waltz and they jumped fences; their sleek brown coats gleamed as they jumped and every face turned to watch them. Then suddenly a voice from the back rang through the tent:

"Good for you, Baron!"

Everybody was convulsed with laughter, the men beating the chairs with their sticks, and a lady on the oposite side laughed till she nearly fell off her seat.

"Look, look!" said Ida.

But two stout men who were following every movement of the horses said:

"Hear, hear!"

People began to laugh again, wagging their heads and laughing at each other for laughing at nothing.

"But they jump beautifully," said Ida, holding her left hand to her bosom and resting her right on Karl's knee.

Karl, who had been following the performance seriously, with little sucks at his cigar, nodded and said with his thoughtful expression:

"That would be a jumper for Kate."

Ida did not take it in at once—but now Karl got up, saying: "Dash it all, I must say how d'ye do to the manager," and her hand dropped from his knee, down on to the arm of the chair—

Then she saw a lady walking on a tight-rope, an im-

mense pink lady, and again she heard people laughing and saw Karl nod to her from the stable entrance (he never liked to see her sitting as if she couldn't move) and she smiled once more as he came towards her.

"There's a prodigality of charms for you," he said, putting his arm through hers.

Ida sat for an instant with her head against his shoulder: "It's just what we used to see at home in the Harbour Square," she said in a voice that trembled ever so little.

"But Schreiber was jolly good," said Karl.

"Oh," said Ida; "Olivia had his portrait hidden in her work-box."

The imposing lady was called again and again. At last the band gave her a flourish, as the applause would not die down.

"Good-night, girlie," said the man who had shouted before, dismissing her with a friendly wave of the hand.

The drums were still banging away as Ida seized Karl's arm:

"There's Miss Friis," she said. She had grown stiff as a corpse.

"Oh, hell!" Karl turned his head rapidly. "Yes, there she is," he said.

But Miss Friis, who was making straight for them, only nodded with cheerful familiarity:

"Good-evening, so you've come out to Amager too?" she said, as she passed on, holding up her skirt. There was an easy, habituated air of attracting notice about her back view. When she had reached her place and seated herself she said to the little long-nosed man in her wake:

"They have been friends from childhood."

"Have they?" he drawled; "that makes it criminal."

"He's a bad hat," whispered Karl, when the couple

had passed. He sat for a good while gazing fixedly at the end of his cigar, and then said, like a man who has made up an unpleasant account:

"Well, she'll keep her mouth shut all right."

But for all that he remained silent, looking as if there was something wrong with his cigar.

Ida leaned towards him—their chairs had moved apart a little—and whispered with a smile (but there was a slight tremor on her lips):

"Karl," and it was the first word she had spoken since Miss Friis had gone by; "I'm not worrying about it."

And she began to talk, rather loudly and with animation, while voices buzzed about them: the bulky tight-rope woman had now appeared on horseback.

"You might keep a little quieter," said Karl.

For a second Ida had tears in her eyes, but then she smiled again (for she knew him so well), and whispered once more, turning her face to him:

"Karl, I'm really not worrying about it."

"It wouldn't be much use if you did," said Karl, still in the same tone; and added abruptly, with a show of getting up:

"Hang it, I want to see the manager."

"Are you going again?" It came so impulsively, and Ida raised her hand an inch or so to stop him (doubtless unconscious that her action was ultimately prompted by vanity).

"I can just as well stay here," said Karl.

"The 'friends from childhood' are not enjoying themselves," said her companion to Miss Friis, who proceeded to nod twice to Ida.

There was a flourish from the band: "Now we've got the jockey," said Karl, straightening himself in his seat, like all the rest, as the rider flew past; "he rides well."

Ida nodded, leaning forward with the look of a child

that stops its ears with its fingers when it is determined to read, and she did not take her eyes off the lightly-clad man standing on the horse's back.

The audience applauded again and again.

"He jumps well," said Karl.

And Ida, still unconsciously following the jockey's figure with her eyes, said, blushing before she had finished the sentence:

"He's not so good-looking as you though."

Karl glanced rapidly at her face:

"Dashed if you're not getting an eye for men now," he said.

And he laughed; but all at once he stretched his legs and said: "Shall we go?" The jockey had gone out, and they got up. Not till they had reached the exit did they turn and nod to Miss Friis.

Again they drove in silence. Ida had captured Karl's hand, which had less life in it with the glove on:

"Can't we go to the Dagmar tonight?"

"Ye-es," said Karl, and added after a moment:

"We're liable to run into people anywhere."

And, suddenly rubbing his hands, he said in a different tone, like a man who had made up his mind to a thing:

"Then by Jove we'll have a *feed*."

He was going to have lobster: "But you must drink porter with it," he said; and a mood of chatty well-being came over him, as though he had already sat down to a succulent mayonnaise.

"This evening we'll drink," said Ida.

"Miss Friis's health," added Karl from his corner; and they both relapsed into silence, staring out of their respective windows.

"Now we're at the bridge," said Ida.

"Thank God for that," rejoined Karl, and he did not

change his position until the cab pulled up at the restaurant, where the waiters were running about among the crowd of customers, and they got a private room.

"It's the same we had last time," said Ida brightly, taking off her cloak.

"They're all alike," grunted Karl, deep in the study of the menu. But on the appearance of the dishes he woke up and threw his head back in complete satisfaction: "Food's what one wants," he exclaimed, as he fell to, with his napkin tucked under his chin. He talked nineteen to the dozen—Of Knuth: "the man's as mad as a hatter," he said, blinking his eyes at Ida; "but a first-rate fellow." Of the Admiral: now he had been caught out again; damme if he could leave the women alone. And of the book-keeper: "Perish me, he's getting worse and worse," he said, twitching his nose, as he went on eating.

But Ida, who sat watching him, said with a smile: "You look so nice when you're eating;" and she slipped her hand under his cuff and up his arm.

"Yes," said Karl, laughing; "if I get nice things to eat;" and he pressed his arm against her hand.

Ida was gazing before her with a thoughtful look: "Soon we shall be able to take our meals at home."

"Yes," was all Karl replied.

But Ida went on talking about the flat: how pretty it would be—now the carpets had come—for both rooms —oh, it was such a beautiful pattern, all withered leaves —and the portières were the same—

She talked on, describing the browns and yellows of the carpets, till she suddenly became aware of Karl's silence. And she would have given the world to go on talking—and stopped.

"But when'll it be ready?" asked Karl, as if he were making some calculation.

"I don't know," replied Ida, resting her head in her hand, in a voice that quivered all at once.

The Russia leather purse was already lying by his glass. He took it up absently and opened it. In one of the pockets was a letter.

Ida seized his arm: "You're not to see that!"

But Karl had opened it out: "It's from Franck, I suppose?" And in a tone he might have used of a dunning letter to himself he added: "It's about money, of course."

Ida did not answer, but hid the letter in her dress, while Karl went on:

"It beats me how you manage to get all that money out of him."

"By lying," said Ida, suddenly dropping her face; and in the same breath—as though to tell him not to take it too much to heart—she said, looking up:

"That's what I've always done."

Karl, who was moved without exactly knowing why, muttered:

"But to lie for a whole flat-full of furniture must take some doing—"

Ida was smiling again, as she thought of the endless web of her subterfuges.

"Well," she said almost laughing; "when you've once started you can always go on with it."

"Damned if you're not getting to be a depraved woman," said Karl. It was long since he had clasped her hand so tightly or so lovingly.

"But why need we talk about it?" said Ida with a fling of her head: "Let's drink now." And she picked up her glass.

When she had emptied it she said on a sudden impulse—not wishing to say anything of the sort:

"The worst they can do is to dismiss me."

"I'd like to see them!" Karl burst out.

"Well, then there'd be an end of it," said Ida.

Karl made no answer, till he said, with the same expression as at the circus:

"But damn it all, she'll keep her mouth shut."

He called to the waiter to bring the bill.

"Must we go already?" said Ida. A feeling of dread always came over her when they were leaving, and her eyes rested on the table and the glasses.

"It's jolly well time," said Karl.

All unconsciously he sighed once or twice as he drew a fifty-crown note out of the Russia leather purse.

But when they were in the cab he proposed—for he didn't exactly want to get rid of her either:

"Now we'll go up to the flat."

"But it's not straight yet," protested Ida.

"Oh, some of it will be straight," replied Karl, and he called the address to the driver.

"You mustn't look at the things," said Ida, as she opened the hall door and lighted a little lamp. But the next moment she pointed, holding the lamp aloft, to two great rolls that were leaning against the wall:

"Those are the carpets."

"What a lot of them," said Karl, who was just thinking that the furniture would be too big for the rooms.

"Yes," she nodded to him; "but you can't see the pattern."

"I'm frightfully thirsty," said Karl, taking off his overcoat.

Ida had some claret and went to fetch it. Karl walked up and down alone, with a cigar that had gone out; in his preoccupation he kept knocking against the furniture, like the bars of a cage. The uncurtained windows stared at him like a pair of watchful eyes.

Ida came in with the wine: "Thanks," he said, and was about to pour it down his throat.

But in a sudden fit of emotion, or desperation—for at that moment he would have liked to smash all the furniture to bits—he said, and his voice was low:

"Well, good luck, Puss."

Ida looked round at the confusion of furniture, which cast long shadows over the room, and up at his face: "This is the first glass we've drunk here."

And she drank it to the last drop, with her eyes fixed on his face.—

Karl was gone.

"Thanks, I'll stay a little while," Ida had said.

Now she was alone. There was not a thought in her head.

She had only wished to be alone when she put on her hat and cloak and when she left. But when she reached the street she almost ran. She thought, what if she met Miss Friis—in the gateway—or outside—and she ran, as though she could avoid it by doing so.

But she reached her room without meeting anybody.

She took off her outdoor things. But she kept walking about the room. Then she opened her door: she wanted to see Roed and Miss Petersen, to see them before they heard it. She went downstairs. The whole house was in silence. Through the passage window came the first gleam of dawn and the patients were dozing. Quietly she turned the key and went in. Roed and Miss Petersen sat on either side of the stove, their eyes stiff with sleep.

"*Gott, Gott,* is that you?" said Miss Petersen.

"I wanted to take a little chloral," said Ida, and absently, or timidly, she stroked her hands over Roed's hair.

"How cold you are," said Roed, in the strangely indifferent voice of a drowsy person.

"Yes."

Ida left her and went to the door of the Men's Ward. The patient in the nearest bed moved, and Ida went in. A bearded man with dark glasses looked up at her from the bed.

"Good-evening, Miss," he said in a very humble voice.

"Good gracious, Lauritzen," said Ida; "is that you?"

The patient made no answer. It was a drunkard, who had been brought in for the third time. He just lay there wringing his hands:

"Yes, it's me," he said after a while, still wringing his hands till the knuckles showed white.

And as he looked up in her face and let his arms drop back to his sides, he said—with the look that a crucified victim must wear:

"I can't help it."

Ida leaned against the bed-post. Quietly and soundlessly she sobbed in despair.—

Karl had come home. Half-undressed he marched up and down the room.

"It's incredible," he said.

"Damme, it's incredible," he kept saying, as he halted and nodded at the lamp.

"But these women can't see a blessed thing," and he nodded again.

At last he sat down on the bed.

"Hm," and he made a wry face, as though this was another extremely disagreeable thing; "and then of course Knuth has been hanging about the Wiener Café waiting."

Finally he got between the blankets. He lay on his back looking up at the ceiling.

"It's a damned funny thing though—they all end by behaving vulgarly in a bed."

Karl von Eichbaum put out his light. But he lay for a long time in the dark tossing and turning and throwing his head about, and his hands too were very restless—like a man tormented by troublesome flies.—

Nor was he in a very bright humour next morning, and could not get his parting straight, as he struggled with brush and comb before the glass. But all at once he raised his head and looked his reflection full in the face, saying half aloud with a nod:

"Yes, that's it: a man acts as he damned well has to."

Ida had waited a long while up in her room. Now she must go down to the tea-room, she could not put it off any longer. She passed through the "violent corridor," then through the "quiet" one. Never had she held herself so straight, she thought. Now there was only the door to be opened, and she would walk in.

"Good-morning."

She was in the room. And in one second she had listened to her own voice and seen in all their faces that they knew nothing; and caught sight of Miss Friis, who was sitting next the door and flew up from her chair to embrace her.

"Good-morning, dearie," she said.

And as she kissed her she darted the tip of her tongue for an instant against Ida's cheek.

Ida turned red as blood—

And she heard Miss Helgesen saying:

"We have had two deaths in the house last night."

PERHAPS HALF AN HOUR Ida had been waiting. Now she would wait no longer. Perhaps no one would come, and so she could slip out.

But Ellingsen was at the door to "help her on."

He took up her cloak and hat, and she got them on:

"Thank you," she said; "good-bye."

But Ellingsen, standing by the door, said to her, and his lips were very moist:

"You've forgotten your parcels, Miss."

Ida took them and Ellingsen opened the door to the street.

"Good-bye," she said and went out.

The street door was one of those that shut quietly of themselves. Mr. Ellingsen returned to the private room. His face still preserved an expression of sympathy. With a napkin he flapped away a little dust which he thought had settled on the cloth, whereupon he dried his mouth with the same napkin. Mr. Ellingsen indeed had rarely made less than sixteen or eighteen crowns a month out of "that party."

There was a ring for him at the buffet.

But the business was getting on very nicely.

Mr. Ellingsen left the room. A lady and gentleman met him in the passage.—

Ida walked along the path by the Ride—no doubt she persuaded herself she did not know where she was going—farther and farther out.

There she met them. She saw them a long way off. *There* they were.

She had to pass them. The little parcels hung so slackly from her nerveless arm and she did not know how she managed to bow her head in greeting.

But Kate pulled up for a moment.

"Good-morning, Miss Brandt," she said, with a wave of her whip. "What lovely weather!"

"Yes, lovely," replied Ida, suddenly turning her eyes full upon her.

"You can positively feel the coming of spring," said

Kate. Karl had halted a few yards from them. It looked as if his horse was a trifle restive.

"Well, *allons*—good-morning."

They rode away.

"She's come a long way out," remarked Kate.

And presently, looking out over her horse's head, she added:

"After all, it's no concern of mine."

Karl was on the point of asking *what*, but checked himself and looked foolish.

"I give you best," he said, after they had trotted on a little way.

Ida had turned. It was as though she suddenly woke up. Every face she met, every railing, every house and every tree, all seemed to her so extraordinarily clear and sharp. And she caught every scrap of conversation, the rumble of every wheel, every sound was so distinct; as though she had a thousand senses, all tuned to the uttermost, because they were all suffering.

But above all she saw the mould and the yellow crocuses and the rose-trees, which were now uncovered—for it would soon be spring.

She could have walked twenty miles, and yet she turned at the end of the Lake from habit.

Close to the Café Rörholm she met Miss Friis, who became vociferous at a distance and then kissed her, as was her way lately. "But my dear child," she said; "today I *must* see the flat." Miss Friis was always worrying to see the flat: now it was only round the corner—

Ida felt so tired all at once, or perhaps she was impelled to drink the cup to the dregs.

"Very well," she said gently; "we can go up."

She walked up the stairs as though climbing a mountain. Miss Friis went ahead, reading the name-plates on all the doors.

"Such a delightfully quiet house," she called out (the tenants were all officials or business men, with one Baptist minister) and could scarcely wait till Ida opened the door and said, as though she had forgotten it:

"There are workmen in the flat."

But Miss Friis was already in the drawing-room, exclaiming:

"But goodness me, how dinky it is!" She had to dart back into the hall and give Ida a rapturous kiss before sweeping on. She felt everything and looked at everything, chattering all the time, till all at once she came to rest on the arm of a chair:

"But, dearest Brandt, what a fortune it must have cost."

Ida sat down. Without moving a muscle she surveyed the whole room: everything was now in its place.

She was not listening to Miss Friis and did not hear that her flood of words suddenly ceased; only felt that she was alone for an instant, and raised her hands from her lap—when Miss Friis reappeared at the door of the bedroom.

"Brandt," she said, and she pronounced the name in a tone she had never used before; "you know what you want."

Ida had risen at the sound of her name, and now her cheeks were ablaze.

"We'll go now," she said, and her pain was almost forgotten.

But Miss Friis was back in the bedroom, bouncing up and down on the big bed.

"We'll go now," Ida repeated.

There was something in her tone which made Miss Friis get up rather briskly.

But Ida waited in silence, first at the drawing-room

door, then at the hall door and finally at the street door, till Miss Friis was outside. Nor was much said as they walked home. Miss Friis was occupied with her thoughts, as if she had made a discovery. But when they reached the gate of the Hospital she said, before going on to call somewhere:

"But for goodness' sake, Brandt, do be careful—this sort of thing is only for we broad-minded people."

Ida quietly freed her arm from the other's hands.

"Good-bye," nodded Miss Friis.

As Ida was going upstairs, still carrying the two little parcels, she met Miss Kjær.

"Oh!" said the latter in her cheery voice—she was so accustomed to Ida bringing something home; "the Maid's got some cakes!"

And she ran on ahead calling to Miss Petersen: "The Maid's got some cakes!" and they quickly assembled for a picnic in the kitchen.

Ida sat watching the cake disappear between Petersen's teeth.

When the two had had enough there was a piece left over. It was offered to Josefine, when she came to fetch the buckets.

"Well, somebody's got to have it," said Josefine.

But Miss Petersen said:

"Ach, we ought to have kept it for our coffee."

Ida had gone out.

Miss Friis's "call" was to run across to Svendsen's, where the long-nosed one was eating his lunch. The lady was quite amazed and breathless from her observations of the morning.

"No, my dear," she said; "I'd never have imagined it of her—*so* cunningly thought out—"

The long-nosed one regarded his bread and butter with abhorrence.

"So help me, the very quiet ones are always like that," he said.

Miss Friis meditated for a while; the vision of the bed and the big washing-basins and the broad couch was continually before her eyes.

"Yes, I suppose they are," she said thoughtfully, with a nod.

Presently she said:

"But, Lord, how lovely it must be to have money."

"Hm," grunted the long-nosed one; "the main thing is to know how you mean to treat each other."

He offered Miss Friis a glass of beer, which she drank with her veil raised.

But all at once she exclaimed with a fresh burst of excitement:

"Frederick, she's moved her bed right out into the middle—"

"Ah, then it'll blinking well stay there," said the long-nosed gentleman.

Kate Mourier had developed an extraordinary habit of walking up and down through the whole suite of rooms with both the greyhounds at her heels.

"Dear Kate, how you do march about," said Mrs. Mourier from her sofa.

"I'm thinking," said Kate without interrupting her walk.

"But couldn't you do it sitting down?" asked her mother.

Suddenly Kate sat down, with the two greyhounds looking at her, and then she got up again. On reaching the door she rested both her arms against the door-posts.

"Is it this evening we're going to a concert?" she asked, with an absent look.

"Yes."

"That's good—I must have some music," she said, and went into her room.

Mrs. Mourier did not leave the sofa. The pages of her "Edition Peters" remained unturned. She was thinking what a good thing it was that Mourier was coming at last—for the dinner-party that was to be given for Aline.

For Mrs. Mourier could not quite make out how matters stood with Kate.

There was a ring at the bell; it was Mrs. von Eichbaum. She only came to ask whether Mourier was bringing his valet to town.

"You see, Mine, it would be better to be sure," she said.

Mourier's valet was to help wait at the dinner Mrs. von Eichbaum was giving in honour of Mrs. Feddersen's visit to town.

They discussed this for a while, and then Mrs. von Eichbaum said, in a different tone:

"The children were out riding, you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mourier with a thoughtful look. She would have liked so much to have a "straight talk"—and left it alone.

Mrs. von Eichbaum and her sister were sitting in Mrs. Gersdorff's dining-room, where Mrs. von Eichbaum's guests were to dine. The table was laid.

Mrs. von Eichbaum looked at the decorations, consisting of crocuses from the country house, and said:

"And then little Brandt is coming. I went out there myself this morning."

And as Mrs. Gersdorff made no immediately reply, she added:

"There was no sense in leaving an empty place, I thought, and as we have had her here, in a way, this winter— Besides, she can make herself useful with the tea."

"But I think you were quite right to ask her," Mrs. Gersdorff agreed; "as you have a place to spare— Particularly," she added, checking herself rather too abruptly after the words were uttered: "under the circumstances."

But Mrs. von Eichbaum evidently did not hear it, as she merely got up, saying:

"And now Julius has only to light the candles."

Mrs. Gersdorff also rose, but on reaching the door Mrs. von Eichbaum paused:

"I should be so glad, you know," she said, speaking more slowly; "if Aline arrived rather early—because then, Lotte" (Mrs. von Eichbaum made a gesture as though putting something in its place), "she would *be* there, as it were."

Her sister nodded, as Mrs. von Eichbaum opened the door.

They went through the passage into Mrs. Gersdorff's kitchen.

"These screens, Lotte," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, as they passed through the kitchen, where certain grey screens hid the range and the crowded kitchen table from view; "these screens are a blessing."

They parted and Mrs. von Eichbaum went on into her own little passage, where she said, rather sharply, to Julius, who was drying his gloves on a line:

"And then Julius will tell the other waiter what to do."

Julius came forward, emitting a faint odour of benzine; he would see to that.

Mrs. von Eichbaum passed on. She left Ane alone till after the dinner.

The three rooms had an air of quiet comfort, and the fires, which had been sparingly fed with coal, burnt low. Mrs. von Eichbaum settled herself on the sofa. She would go on with her lace-making till it was time to dress. The bed-curtain would soon be finished—in a few weeks. But then Kate, dear child, had really worked quite hard at it lately, in the evenings. And her work was very even.

It really seemed as if her pretty fingers were acquiring more repose.

The bobbins slipped from Mrs. von Eichbaum's hands and she fell into a reverie. The light was beginning to fade. Mrs. von Eichbaum thought of so many things, of this last winter and of all the winters that had gone before, of Aline and of Kate and of Karl— And all at once she remembered one of the Court Chaplain's sermons.

He had expounded the idea of fidelity, of the daily task and its reward, which was conducive to peace.

Mrs. von Eichbaum was moved and in the gathering dusk she used her pocket-handkerchief. Her eyes were fixed on the portrait of Mr. von Eichbaum over the writing-table: he could still be seen in the faint light.

His widow had clasped her hands.

Then she was roused from her thoughts: she heard Karl. He opened the dining-room door and came in.

"Is Mother dressed?" he asked.

"No indeed, I've been sitting in my corner," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum; "but everything is in order."

"Then are we going to have Christensen?" said Karl, who had dropped into a chair.

"Yes."

They sat in silence for a while, till Mrs. von Eichbaum said:

"And then I've invited Miss Brandt."

Perhaps she had expected a word from the shadows, but no word came, and neither heard any sound but the ticking of the clock.

"You see, she has been here a good deal this winter," came the voice from the sofa.

"And"—these was an almost imperceptible change in Mrs. von Eichbaum's tone—"then I intended it to be a sort of conclusion."

The clock ticked on, perhaps a minute.

"Would you light the lamp in the corner," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Karl lighted it, and his mother rose.

"It's quite time," she said; and as she passed her son she laid her arm on his shoulder:

"I have been sitting here looking at your father's portrait—"

Karl felt that she was trembling.

And, suddenly affected by her emotion, he said:

"Mother is so good"—and kissed her forehead.

"And now we shall have to dress," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "Julius has left the plan of the table for you."

Karl stood in his own room studying the plan of the table. He felt something of a relief: Ida, whom the Curate was to take in, would be on the same side of the table as himself.

Julius had just finished lighting the candles in the other dining-room, when the Mouriers' Mr. Christensen arrived with his shirt-front covered by a velvet protector. Julius treated the new-comer with great ceremony,

saying that "perhaps he might be permitted to acquaint him with the way things were done."

He showed Mr. Christensen into Mrs. Gersdorff's spare room, by the side of the dining-room, and Mr. Christensen divested himself of his overcoat, surveying the two beds meanwhile.

"We use this room for the service," said Julius.

Julius had thought that Mr. Christensen might hand the wine.

Mr. Christensen, who wore gold sleeve-links and three square gold studs in his front—he had served in the Guards and during Mr. Mourier's annual visits to Carlsbad had studiously adapted himself to cosmopolitan fashions—regarded the bottles.

"Of white wine," said Julius, "we usually serve twelve glasses to the bottle."

Mr. Christensen, who looked like a man determined to be surprised at nothing, began sorting the bottles with a pair of well manicured hands. On the little finger of the left he wore a heavy gold ring.

Mrs. von Eichbaum had finished dressing and was spraying her rooms with a "suspicion" of eau de Cologne.

The hall porter had taken up his position at the entrance to give orders to the cab drivers. They were to pull up in the street. The courtyard was too narrow for them to turn in easily.

But the first guest arrived on foot. It was the Curate. He always came first, from an awkward dread of being too late, and he said to Julius, as he removed a number of queer garments:

"I suppose nobody is here yet," and went into the drawing-room with his head on one side, as Mrs. von Eichbaum rose to greet him: "It is delightful to see you, Henrik; it shows you are pretty well." The Curate

found a seat and thanked her. When the Curate sat in the middle of a room he looked as if he had squeezed into a corner, and he held his feet curiously close together, as though they were in a foot-muff. Mrs. von Eichbaum who heard fresh arrivals in the hall, remarked:

"Yes, the spring is a trying time for all cases of that sort—"

The Curate's "case" was an impaired digestion.

"But I hope you have had a sheepskin rug under your table this winter?"

Mrs. von Eichbaum got up without waiting for an answer. It was the Schleppegrell family who appeared in the morning room.

"Heavens, my dear," said Mrs. Schleppegrell, who was quite out of breath; "I don't know how we got here so early—and I've had to rush about for hours."

Mrs. Schleppegrell had spent four hours of her day at the Custom House, as she proceeded to inform the company.

The Admiral had exchanged greetings with the Curate—much as he might have received a ship's cook; and Mrs. Schleppegrell moved over to Mrs. Gersdorff, who usually came in on hearing the first carriage and perhaps had hoped it was Aline. Karl had made his bows, clicking his patent leather heels together, and stopped by Fanny, who wore a lace veil over a salmon-coloured dress made for a Court ball of some seasons back, while Mrs. von Eichbaum said, to keep the conversation going:

"I suppose, Fanny, you went to hear Père Dominique this morning? *What* was his subject?"

The Jesuit had preached on authority.

The Admiral, who was sincerely religious every Sunday and attended morning service with his hymn book in his pocket, remarked:

"Damme, I don't like all this running after Catholic preachers—"

"Heavens, Schleppegrell," said Mrs. Gersdorff—the conversation had become rather staccato, but it was only the Falkenbergs who appeared—"to a steadfast mind like Fanny's it can only have an enlightening effect."

And Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was on her feet again, put in:

"No, Schleppegrell, I can't agree with you either—we were just talking of the Catholics, Emmy—the Catholics after all have those noble views which give uplift—"

And Mrs. Gersdorff added, as she heard the door open again and saw Fanny arming herself with her lorgnette:

"It can't be denied that Catholicism has something about it that seems to last."

For a second, while no one stopped talking, the eyes of all glanced at Mrs. Aline, who appeared in the doorway.

"Good-evening, Aline," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, giving her both hands, and without speaking Mrs. Aline advanced into the room, in her silk gown, leaning on her stick. Mrs. von Eichbaum kept at her side, while her friend gave her hand to each in turn—Mrs. Falkenberg unconsciously stuck out her elbows as she shook hands, like a child learning to waltz—and the Admiral was heard to say (he was still talking of Catholicism):

"Damme if I think it's wholesome."

Mrs. Schleppegrell had risen to embrace the guest of the evening, while over by the étagère Colonel Falkenberg was heard saying to the Curate: "Yes, that's it, you go out in the sunshine and get let in for this cold wind." Mrs. Gersdorff took Mrs. Aline's stick and said:

"Sit down here, Aline."

Mrs. Feddersen seated herself in the corner of the sofa, and the circle seemed to close about her.

But Mrs. von Eichbaum, returning to the door of the morning room, said with a laugh:

"Of course it will be the Lindholms, they are always late."

The Mouriers and Miss Rosenfeld had arrived together.

"No, Andreas," Mrs. Mourier had said before leaving home; "I don't want to see her arrive."

Now her heart seemed to fail her and she hesitated in the morning room, from whence she could see Aline on the corner sofa.

"Heavens, how grey she has turned," she said to Fanny, who was nearest, and there were tears in Mrs. Mourier's eyes.

"Who?" asked Fanny.

Karl, walking about with the plan of the table, suddenly came upon Ida behind everybody else, away in the corner by the india-rubber plant.

"Are you there all alone?" he said, clicking his heels and turning a little pale.

And Mrs. von Eichbaum, who had entirely forgotten her, but who was all ears, came forward: "Good-evening. Miss Brandt," she said, and introduced her to one or two of those standing by. All at once Mrs. Lindholm sailed into the morning room, followed by her husband, a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and now there was quite a crowd, while Kate exclaimed in the doorway: "There, now we're eighteen," as though counting the animals going into the ark.

They were already going in to dinner, before Mourier had finished shaking everyone powerfully by the hand, and couple after couple passed out through the doors.

The Curate made a sideways bow to Ida, whom he had never seen, and the two went last of all.

But when they came to the screens Karl, with Mrs. Lindholm on his arm, slipped behind Ida, laying his hand on her waist for a second, as though there was not room to pass.

"We've got to bring up the rear," he said.

And Mrs. Lindholm, whose father supplied the Royal Household with glassware, remarked with a glance at the screens:

"How convenient it is for you to share a house with your aunt."

"Yes," replied Karl, who had noticed her glance; "those screens are family property; I believe, upon my soul, they're an heirloom."

Mrs. Lindholm laughed, raising her skirts a trifle high as they went through the passage, as though she were crossing a farmyard. On reaching the dining-room Karl rapidly surveyed the table with the eye of a host. His face seemed older for the moment, with a certain official look.

They had all taken their places, his mother at the bottom of the table, the Admiral at the head, with the Commander's cross round his neck and Mrs. Feddersen at his side.

Julius began to hand the soup with a solemn air, as though carrying a pair of offertory plates.

The conversation started with dining-rooms and their arrangements.

"Anyway there's room enough here, thank God," said Mr. Mourier as he tucked his napkin over his broad chest.

The conversation spread round the table, still on the subject of dining-rooms, and Mrs. von Eichbaum re-

marked, while Mrs. Mourier bent forward to screen Mrs. Aline, whose hand shook so that she spilled her soup:

"But I don't know of any dining-room to compare with that at Korsgaard."

And Mrs. Aline, whose voice seemed a tone deeper than the others, replied:

"At any rate it's cool."

Miss Rosenfeld had listened for a moment to the sound of Mrs. Aline's voice, and replied absently to a question of Lindholm's:

"Yes, we now have a hundred pupils in the school."

Which gave Mrs. Schleppegrell occasion to heave an ample display of bosom and exclaim:

"Yes, its incredible, in our day everybody must be doing something."

But Mrs. Gersdorff said:

"Heavens, my dear, what can you expect with all this restlessness? There's nobody now who has sufficient repose to sit still and knit a stocking."

Mr. Mourier declared that the halibut was quite excellent, and while Mr. Christensen, who had removed the ring from his little finger, was pouring out the white wine, Colonel Falkenberg caught the word "repose" and cut in:

"Yes, but who is to blame for that, Mrs. Gersdorff? We" (and the Colonel's voice became sharper) "we have two Opposition papers in our house.—If I had my way those rags should never be allowed inside our door."

Mrs. Falkenberg, who ate very little but constantly had her eyes on Mrs. Aline, as though gazing at a miracle that had happened in her immediate vicinity, replied:

"But, Falkenberg, one can't keep the children from reading."

"But one needn't argue with them," retorted the Colonel.

Mrs. von Eichbaum interposed:

"Yes, Emmy, *there* I agree with Falkenberg; these everlasting discussions only lead to unrest."

Mourier, who was eating steadily, expressed the broad-minded opinion that one must find out what ideas those people had: he took the *Social Democrat* himself, blest if he didn't.

"My dear Mourier," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, who heard with that relief that Mrs. Aline was becoming animated on the subject of the Orphanage at Unsgaard; "I don't think that's right—"

Mrs. von Eichbaum meant "on account of the example." Things were bad enough already in these days:

"Can you imagine it, the other day—if I didn't discover that Ane and Julius—Ane, if you please,—subscribe to one of those little papers. One can't conceive what put it into their heads."

Mourier laughed, but the topic of journalism had reached Lindholm, who declared that occasionally one saw those people at the theatre, and he often wondered: "Because they're really quite well dressed," he said in a tone as though he expected all journalists to be out at elbows.

The Admiral informed them that once he had had a man from a paper on board the *Helgoland*, and "damme, he talked quite sensibly"; but his wife, still pursuing her theme that everybody insisted on doing something, told Mrs. Mourier across the table, speaking of a young lady of their circle:

"My dear Mine, haven't you heard?—yes, she's going to set up as a maternity nurse."

The Curate, whose regimen had obliged him to eat his fish without sauce (he was the son of a celebrity of the

'fifties and had been occupied for the last ten years in arranging the paternal "Reminiscences," growing steadily thinner all the time), said to Ida:

"But it must be a very profitable vocation to be able thus to alleviate the sufferings of one's fellow-creatures."

"Yes," replied Ida, and again their conversation came to a standstill. She showed two red spots, one over each eyebrow, as if she had just been standing over a frying-pan.

Mrs. von Eichbaum glanced down the table with her hostess's look.

"Oh, Miss Brandt," she said; "would you mind taking that dish and letting it go around?"

Ida gave a start. She had only heard the talk as a buzz which had nothing to do with her, and now she heard Karl's voice, talking to Miss Mourier again.

"Yes," she said, and took the dish.

"Thank you," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

Lindholm was talking to Fanny Schleppegrell about the Princes: one of them had presented her with a paper-knife. And the conversation about the Royal Family became general.

While the talk grew more and more animated and the Admiral was coming to closer quarters with Mrs. Feddersen, Mrs. Gersdorff and Colonel Falkenberg were speaking of a friend of theirs who was tutor to the Prince and had to prepare him for an examination.

"But he is tremendously tied, you know," said Mrs. Gersdorff; "he has to sleep in the adjoining room."

The Colonel replied with something about the excellent example and turned to Miss Rosenfeld:

"Well," he said, "of course you're a Radical like my wife?"

"I don't know what you understand by the word,"

replied Miss Rosenfeld; "but at any rate I'm very fond of the King, because I think him a chivalrous person."

Karl and Kate laughed at the word "person," and Mrs. Gersdorff said to Miss Rosenfeld:

"My dear Betty, that is not his only quality."

But Mrs. Falkenberg, who had two red spots on her cheeks—they often came there, apparently as the result of suppressed or secret excitement—said to no one in particular, though it was doubtless meant for her husband:

"After all, you can't stop people thinking—"

And the Colonel replied:

"Yes, they think and think till they don't know where they are."

Mourier, who caught his words, laughed and said:

"You're jolly well right there;" and he clinked glasses with the Colonel.

The word "thinking" reminded Mrs. von Eichbaum of Martensen's "Ethics," a book she was just reading. She absorbed it by easy stages:

"But I don't find him difficult to follow," she said; "owing to his lucid style."

Suddenly Mrs. Gersdorff addressed Ida across the table (it had struck the lady that "she looked so forlorn"):

"Is there much illness this year, Miss Brandt?"

"Yes, a good deal," Ida managed to reply. All she heard was Karl and Kate laughing—how they laughed, a long way off as it were. And then she kept an eye on the dishes, passing them on almost feverishly, with the sudden reawakening of an old habit, the habit she had learnt at Ludvigsbakke.

Mourier, whose eyes had rested on Ida as they ranged round the table, bent forward to Mrs. von Eichbaum:

"Who is she?" he asked in a half-whisper; and Ida

heard the hostess say in the course of a lengthy explanation:

"And her father, you know, was land steward to the Councillor, a most respectable man."

Perhaps Ida was not aware that she was fighting to keep back her tears.

At the other end of the table the conversation had taken a more cheerful turn. They were still talking of Unsgaard, and Mrs. von Eichbaum joined in, while Mrs. Schleppegrell had returned to the subject of the Customs and said in conclusion to Mrs. Lindholm:

"But, dear me, I'm hoping to get a few pieces of silk through when your mother-in-law and Mary come home.—You know, if you just lay them at the bottom of a trunk—"

She was caught up in the reminiscences of Unsgaard and abandoned the topic of silk. Mrs. Mourier's voice was loud and gay, she was so delighted at the complete thaw that had set in round Aline; and Mrs. Feddersen herself leaned forward with her face full in the light.

"Yes, that was a lovely time," said Mrs. Mourier. "Do you remember, Mille?" she spoke down the table to Mrs. von Eichbaum—"when we used to drive to Marienlyst and dance? That was in Brix's time. I haven't been there for an age."

Mrs. von Eichbaum made some reply—with a sudden moistening of the eyes: it was *there* she had first met Eichbaum.

And they all talked of those days: of the evening parties and the officers from Kronborg and the drives to Gurre and the bathing, when they drove in a farm cart down to the beach at Hellebæk, and their picnics in Grib Forest, which was so still and vast—

Their faces were all so bright, and their voices all had just the same sound—even Mrs. Aline's.

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Schleppegrell; "whatever you may say, people were much better in those days."

But the Admiral, whose Commander's cross was now hanging slightly awry and who was thinking it was incredible, damme, how well Aline had worn, said to her:

"Yes, I've not forgotten how I used to swing you!"

Karl and Kate had started chattering French, but all at once Karl leaned forward—the others were still talking of Grib Forest—and raised his glass:

"Miss Brandt," he said.

Ida gave a start and scarcely lifted her eyes. Then she drank.

But Karl remained silent and abstracted for a moment. A look of melancholy had come into his eyes.

"Oh, Miss Brandt," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, a little hurriedly; "would you pass round that jam?"

But it was Miss Rosenfeld who replied, in a slightly raised voice:

"Let me, Mrs. von Eichbaum."

Everyone was talking, while the candles flickered in the heated air, and Lindholm was discoursing to the Curate of memoir literature. He was bound to say that on the whole he preferred memoirs to any other form of reading, especially those about Napoleon.

"In reading memoirs one has a feeling, so to speak, that we're all human."

This led Colonel Falkenberg to speak of Napoleon's marshals and Marshal Ney's tomb, which, he said, was a simple one, as befitted the grave of a soldier; while Mrs. Lindholm asked Fanny if she knew what Madame Verdier charged for a set of old lace—

Nearly everyone talked, scarcely giving one another

time to answer. Miss Rosenfeld forced Ida to take part. Mourier, whose face was flushed, clapped his hand on Mrs. von Eichbaum's arm, saying:

"We're having a jolly good time."

"My dear Mourier," asked Mrs. von Eichbaum with a smile; "it's so easy, when one is in one's own circle."

The black game, a present from Mrs. Mourier, had disappeared, and Mr. Christensen was handing the port.

At Mrs. Aline's end they were still talking of Unsgaard days, when Mrs. Mourier said:

"But now we shall all meet again at Ludvigsbakke."

And Mourier, who heard her, said with a broad and happy smile:

"My word, yes, that's right—welcome, everybody, as soon as the house is up. Today they're pulling down the last wall of the old shanty—"

The name Ludvigsbakke had roused Ida, but she did not know that she was staring at Mr. Mourier's face, leaning forward, while the colour left her cheeks.

"The old walls were pretty tough, all the same," said Mourier; "well, the stone'll come in for the new stables."

"The old house was very nice, though," said Mrs. von Eichbaum.

"I should think it was nice," replied Mourier in a quieter tone; "but young people are never satisfied."

"But you're spoiling Kate," said Mrs. Gersdorff.

"No!" protested Kate with the shrill accent of a street-boy; "we couldn't possibly pig it in the old quarters."

At once Kate became the centre of the table, as they talked of the new rooms, the staircases, the billiard-room and the bath-rooms and the tower and the terraces, the stone vases for which had been ordered from Italy.

Mrs. Lindholm was extremely interested and leaned over the table asking questions, while Fanny withdrew her meagre bust and looked as if she were sniffing a concentrated essence of vinegar, and Kate enlarged on the banisters and the parquet floors and the English tea-room.

The conversation became animated, and Mrs. Mourier, regarding her daughter with affectionate admiration, said to Mrs. Gersdorff: "Yes, my dear, people expect more and more nowadays," while Karl was intent on describing the stables to Lindholm, explaining that they were on the English plan, with big loose-boxes, marble floors and water laid on.

"Grand, I tell you," said Karl; "I did the plans myself."

And Kate was telling Mrs. Lindholm about the bedrooms, how they all faced north, as one ought to sleep in a cold room.

Ida was unconscious that Julius had offered her an ice, and that she had taken it on to her plate.

But the two young people grew keener and keener, as her father chaffed Kate and Colonel Falkenberg criticized the loose-boxes. Slightly heated by the warmth of the room and the wine, they both talked at once, in opposite directions, Kate to her father and Karl to the Colonel, about bedrooms and horses and central heating and loose-boxes, so that it sounded like a regular duet. Even Mrs. Feddersen was all attention, and now and again a fleeting gleam came into her grey eyes at the mention of all these comfortable arrangements and marble baths.

And all at once Mrs. Mourier sent Mrs. von Eichbaum a nod, with tears in her kind eyes.

But Mourier took his napkin from his chin and declared:

"There's no holding young people."

When it was a little quieter again Miss Rosenfeld said calmly:

"But the old house held many delightful memories."

Karl heard what she said and abruptly broke off his explanation, forgetting to answer Lindholm—

Mrs. Falkenberg tried to catch her husband's eye, but the Colonel was nibbling a biscuit and talking to Mrs. Schleppegrell about remounts.

Mrs. von Eichbaum gave the signal to rise.

Ida did not notice it and only got up when the Curate offered her his arm. As though half-awake she glanced for a moment at the table with the remains of the meal and the candles, which were smoking a little, and down at her own place. The blood-red ice had melted and left a smudge of coloured water on her plate.

The Admiral handed Mrs. Aline Feddersen her stick, but she thought she could walk without it. And, leaning on the arm of the Admiral, whose enamelled cross gleamed in the light from the Eichbaum candlesticks, she walked, not without trouble, but still erect among the other couples, past the screens into Mrs. von Eichbaum's apartments, where Mr. Christensen was serving the coffee.

Ladies and gentlemen talked loudly, scattered in groups about the room. Mrs. Mourier stood by Mrs. von Eichbaum, holding both her dry hands.

"It went delightfully, my dear," she said; "but then I don't know anyone who understands the art as you do."

Mrs. Mourier did not explain what she meant exactly by the art, or perhaps she did not know it herself.

But Mrs. von Eichbaum replied:

"Dear Vilhelmine, it all goes of its own accord."

"Yes, when one understands it," said Mrs. Mourier.

Quite mechanically—or perhaps as an unconscious protection—Ida had picked up the sugar and cream and went round offering them. She came up to Mrs. Mourier.

"Thank you, Ida," said Mrs. von Eichbaum; "you are always such a help."

And Mrs. Mourier, helping herself to sugar, said in a friendly tone:

"You go about, Miss Brandt, as if you were a daughter of the house."

"Yes," said Ida and passed on.

"I'm sure she's very nice," remarked Mrs. Mourier, who felt a vague compassion—perhaps for the strange suggestion of middle age that had come over Ida's person. Her yellow dress looked too big for her, as though the body inside it were not really alive, and the waved hair on her little forehead looked remarkably like a wig or something that had been stuck on.

"Oh, excellent, my dear," replied Mrs. von Eichbaum. "And one of those rare people who always know their place."

The gentlemen had retired to Karl's room to smoke, with the exception of the Admiral, who went for his usual stroll for the sake of his digestion. Lindholm was saying that Copenhagen was a charming capital, by gad—one couldn't get a decent shirt in the whole town.

Meanwhile Mourier had buttonholed Karl in the hall:

"Look here, I've been wanting to write about it for ever so long—you see, we all know what it costs a young man to have to escort young ladies about—a whole winter.—But now" (Mr. Mourier was quite bashful) "we'll leave a cheque at the branch here—and so that'll be all right, you can go up and cash it any time.

"No, no—nothing to thank for," he concluded abruptly. Karl had gone red as fire and Mr. Mourier turned round, greatly relieved:

"But what about shifting over to the dining-room?" he said; "there's more room there and it's a good thing to get away from the ladies after dinner—"

Presently the gentlemen moved back to Mrs. Gersdorff's dining-room, where Mr. Christensen and Julius had just finished clearing away.

Mr. Christensen's nostrils became very active when he reached Mrs. Feddersen's place, where her perfume still lingered.

"I must say she's still a remarkable fine woman," he had observed to Julius.

A calm had fallen upon the ladies after their coffee and the departure of the men. Mrs. Schleppegrell was half asleep on the sofa after the exertions of the morning (besides which she always ate heartily when dining out), and in the corner under the gas a group was discussing books and reading. Mrs. Falkenberg, nervously rubbing her cheek with her clenched hand, said thoughtfully:

"But one is so often upset by what one reads."

To which Mrs. von Eichbaum, who was talking to Mrs. Lindholm about Mary, replied:

"My dear Emmy, surely one reads for the sake of repose."

But Mrs. Falkenberg, still rubbing her cheek, insisted, dropping her voice a little:

"But then one wants to learn something about life."

"I think life is seldom as we read of it in books," said Miss Rosenfeld.

Mrs. Gersdorff, who had drawn Ida on to the arm of the sofa, said to change the subject:

"Now you, Miss Brandt, have duties to fulfil"; and

she lifted Ida's arm with a friendly gesture. It fell back so lifelessly on the marble table, as though broken or out of joint, that Mrs. Gersdorff gave her a rapid glance:

"But of course the strain is severe," she said with a change of tone.

Mrs. Schleppegrell, waking up and hearing them talk of reading, remarked from her sofa:

"My dears, one has one's work cut out to keep up with things. Fanny and I read ourselves to sleep every evening."

In the morning-room Mrs. Feddersen was taking a few moments' rest. She may have been rather tired, as she had closed her eyes and was leaning her head against the wall. She sat full in the light and the strings of red beads that fell over her bust looked almost like blood running down into her lap. She had not noticed that Mrs. Mourier came in and sat down beside her.

"How often you have been in my thoughts," said Mrs. Mourier, quietly slipping her hand into Aline's.

Mrs. von Eichbaum had the windows of her dining-room opened; they were already open on Mrs. Gersdorff's side of the house. The men's laughter and Mr. Mourier's voice reached Mrs. von Eichbaum's rooms, merging both wings into a festive whole, together with the lighted courtyard. The bell rang and Julius went to the door. It was the young people beginning to arrive, girls in light frocks and young men in fresh shirt-fronts, who bowed all round to their elders.

A little beardless pianist, who was rather overwhelmed and asked for a cushion to sit on, at last took his place at the piano, and one or two young couples began waltzing round the dining-room, while the men's laughter blended with the music.

Mrs. von Eichbaum went to and fro. On her way

from the other dining-room she called into her own kitchen:

"Julius!"

Julius came forward, followed by Mr. Christensen, who was in his shirt-sleeves and wore fixed cuffs.

"Perhaps Julius will put the screens straight," said Mrs. von Eichbaum and passed on.

Mr. Mourier had knocked one of them over on his way through the kitchen.

In the doorway of her own dining-room Mrs. von Eichbaum came upon Ida.

"Dear Miss Brandt," she said, and she was slightly ruffled; "I'm so worried about cups—whether there will be enough, because the young people must have some tea— Would you be so very kind as to see—"

Ida's reply was lost in the cheerful music and Mrs. von Eichbaum merely saw that she bowed her head and went.

Out in the kitchen she found an apron (it sometimes happens that drunken people act in a purely reasonable and orderly fashion, only they can't remember afterwards what they have been doing) and tied it on. Under the flame of the gas Ida washed cup after cup.

At the drawing-room door stood Mrs. Mourier watching the young people dancing. And now Karl, who by the way had taken a good many liqueurs on the quiet, had come across and was dancing with Kate.

"Oh, how lovely it is to see so much happiness," said Mrs. Mourier, putting her arm through Mrs. von Eichbaum's. And side by side they looked at their children.

The laughter and noise from the men's room grew louder as the music stopped. The Admiral had come back, and one or two of the young men had sneaked across.

Standing in the middle of the room the Colonel was holding forth on the moral feelings and the defence of the country.

Lindholm had been asking the Curate what little lady that was he took in to dinner, and the Curate had explained, adding:

"No doubt a very ladylike little woman, for that matter— But"—and the Curate made some queer little gestures of the hands—"one can't help thinking all the time, you know, that a person like that might carry infection."

The Colonel was still on his feet, talking louder and louder about His Excellency the War Minister as the backbone of the whole patriotic movement. But the Admiral, who, like Mr. Mourier, had sat with an air of listening, turned to Mourier and asked:

"But why did you say no when they wanted to send you to the Upper House?"

"Well," said Mourier, with a wriggle; "I'm damned if I know. Of course I'm a Conservative—of course," he repeated; "but, you see, Admiral, devil take me if I've got the gift of being properly scandalized, and in public life you can't get on without that, in this country."

"Ah," said the Admiral; "well, thank God, they don't expect us to be scandalized at sea."

And the two men laughed gaily, as they drank a liqueur, and began walking up and down and talking of Mrs. Aline.

"Well," said Mourier, "I believe my wife's right. She says that kind of thing doesn't happen if the husband keeps hale and hearty—"

But the Admiral scratched his head and replied:

"Ye-es, but I remember well enough at Unsgaard, when they were girls and I used to swing them—she

had a way of pulling herself up in the swing and catching her breath—

"No," and the Admiral looked almost pleased with himself; "she's one of the stormy females."

Over in Mrs. von Eichbaum's rooms the sound of the piano was heard again, and Lindholm, who was standing at the window watching the dancers, said to Karl, who had come across to get another liqueur:

"What about it, Eichbaum, shall we go over and twirl round a bit?"

While the Colonel suddenly asked Mourier:

"But, my dear Mourier, how is it you're not a Privy Councillor?"

"Because my wife won't have it," said Mourier.

Ida had come in again and was sitting beside Miss Rosenfeld when Karl came towards her. He was red in the face and his voice was a little unsteady.

"Miss Brandt," he said, "now we must have a dance."

Ida made no reply, and got on her feet with difficulty. Karl thought she felt quite thin on his arm.

They only danced once round. "Thanks," said Ida, and her lifeless hands were insensible of his, as they clasped them with a pressure almost of despair.

"She ought to go out and put her hair straight," said young Falkenberg, as Karl led Ida back.

Miss Rosenfeld had risen from her seat and Ida stood by her.

Then Miss Rosenfeld said, taking her hand:

"Little Ida, what are you doing here?"

Perhaps Ida did not understand the words, but she said nevertheless:

"I'm going home."

She saw no one as she passed through the rooms, where the music had stopped, and she did not know that

she dropped a curtsy to Mrs. von Eichbaum, almost as when she was a child, and managed to say:

"I have to get up so early."

There was no one in the hall and she got her own cloak. Nothing pained her now except the light. It hurt her eyes. She took a step or two towards the door of Karl's room—

Then she turned and went out.

It was blowing a gale and raining, but she noticed nothing. Hurrying on she struggled against the wind. She did not hear that a voice was speaking to her.

It was Knuth, who was walking with another officer, in uniform.

"But is that you, Miss Brandt," he said; "walking in this weather?"

And suddenly catching sight of her pale face, he asked:

"Are you ill?—Let me fetch a cab."

Ida had made no answer, but Knuth ran off and she waited; there was something in his voice which seemed to release the blood that had congealed about her heart.

The cab came up and Knuth helped her in.

"Thank you," she said, and they exchanged no other word.—

Karl had gone back to Mrs. Gersdorff's dining-room. He helped himself to another liqueur, while Lindholm preferred soda-water.

Karl sat down, staring at the almost burnt-out candles.

"By God, it costs something to live," he said suddenly.

Lindholm laughed as he replied:

"Oh well—you'll be able to afford it, Eichbaum."

But Karl evidently did not hear him, as he still stared at the candles, till he clicked his tongue and said:

"But I suppose one'll be a gain to society."

The Admiral and Mourier were coming through the passage by the kitchen, where the Admiral chanced to knock down a screen.

"Confound the beastly things!" he said.

"But they hide the fireplace, Admiral," laughed Mourier.

Over in the drawing-room the elder ladies, now rather tired, were admiring Mrs. von Eichbaum's bed-curtain.

"Yes," said Mrs. von Eichbaum, "it's practically finished except the bows. And Kate has promised to tie those for me."

The young people were dancing a quadrille, ladies and gentlemen flying in and out rather wildly. Now and again the Colonel's voice rose above the music. He was talking about the traditions.

IDA OPENED AND CLOSED the gates and doors of the Hospital very gently.

But as she was passing the door on the first floor it was opened upon her by Dr. Qvam.

"Is that you?" he said; "oh, what a night—two suicides, and they've both got to be pumped out."

Petersen had heard Dr. Qvam speaking to Ida and put her head out of the door:

"Ach, how have you enjoyed yourself?" she said, hauling Ida into the Department, where Miss Roed sat under the gas eating her dinner.

There were screams from the Women's Ward, and from the Men's came the moans of the patients.

"Ach, ach," said Miss Petersen, who had to run hither and thither; "there's a lot of trouble tonight."

Dr. Qvam glanced at Room "A" and asked Miss Roed:

"Isn't he in bed?"

"No."

"And he's being passed out tomorrow?"

"Yes."

Dr. Qvam opened the door of the room.

The patient of "A" was sitting up on the ledge by the open window, gazing out into the storm. The shower was past and the stars were shining again.

"Are you sitting *there?*" said Dr. Qvam; "that's a trifle against the regulations."

The man in "A" half turned his head and fastened his weary eyes on the Doctor:

"But I'm sitting here precisely to digest the regulations."

And, as though talking to himself, he went on in his curious voice, which always sounded as though it were laden with pity:

"I am looking at the stars—the sublime stars."

He paused for a moment.

"When I was young I gazed at them because I wished to pull them down. Now I look at them in order to learn patience."

Dr. Qvam had come nearer. From below he looked up at the man in "A": in that face there was something of the great sorrow.

Then the patient came down from his ledge:

"But let us submit to the laws," he said, closing the shutters.

Qvam had not moved:

"Yes, but who made the laws?"

The man in "A" smiled:

"Wasn't it 'the Boss'?" he said.

But the fugitive smile was gone, and he asked:

"Then am I to leave here tomorrow?"

"Yes, tomorrow morning."

The man in "A" reflected for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders wearily:

"I dare say it's just as well, Doctor."

And, fixing his eyes on Qvam, he added with another smile, which was like a farewell:

"Your world does not tempt me."

Qvam was suddenly affected and said in a lower tone:

"But life has to be lived."

"Yes," replied the man in "A"; "by those who are not shut up.

"Now let me say good-bye," he said, and opened the door.

In the outer room Miss Koch, the matron of the Women's Ward, had come to fetch Dr. Qvam.

Ida was standing on the same spot, by the door, leaning against the wall. The rain had taken the wave out of her hair.

The man in "A" shook hands with each in turn:

"Good-bye," he said.

Last of all he took Ida's hand and then he raised his eyes:

"Good-bye."

Having said that he went in again and closed his door.

There was a moment's silence when he was gone. Then Miss Koch said, looking at Ida, who had not moved:

"So now there's an end of that jollification."

And Qvam, who had given her a rapid glance, said:

"My word, yes, Miss Brandt, you look as if you wanted to sleep it off."

There was a sound of unlocking doors. Dr. Qvam and Miss Koch went into the Women's Ward.

"Good-night," said Ida faintly.

Again there was a sound of keys. Ida Brandt went up to her room.

The screams of the "violent" rang through the building, seeming to come from far, far below—from under the earth.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set in a type called Scotch. There is a divergence of opinion regarding the exact origin of this face, some authorities holding that it was first cut by Alexander Wilson & Son, of Glasgow, in 1837, while others trace it back to a modernized Caslon old style brought out by Mrs. Henry Caslon in 1796. The type was widely used in Scotland, under the name "Modern Roman," but since its introduction into America it has been known as Scotch. Its essential characteristics are sturdy capitals, full rounded lower case letters, the graceful fillet of the serifs and a general effect of crispness.

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